



Living
in the
Questions

Ralph N
Helverson

LIVING IN THE QUESTIONS

by

RALPH NORMAN HELVERSON



www.unitarian.org.uk/docs



THE LINDSEY PRESS

The Lindsey Press, Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street
Strand, London WC2R 3HY

© Ralph N. Helverson 1977

I want to beg you, as much as I can . . . to be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves. . . . Do not seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.

RAINER MARIA RILKE
Letters to a Young Poet

Cover design by Dorothy Steedman
Book designed by John Rowland

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
REDWOOD BURN LIMITED
Trowbridge & Esher

A NOTE TO READERS IN GREAT BRITAIN

Ralph Norman Helverson was born in Kansas City, Missouri, and grew up in a family of six children. His father was a farmer, and young Ralph experienced the full range of farm work. He took his BA degree from Anderson College; his MA from Cornell University; his BD from Garrett Theological Seminary; Meadville, Lombard Theological School, affiliated with the University of Chicago, awarded him a DD degree in 1970.

He has served only two churches in his ministry—sixteen years at the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca, New York, and a Chaplain at Cornell University; eighteen years at the First Parish in Cambridge, and as a member of the United Ministry at Harvard and Ratcliffe. During his Cambridge Ministry he carried out an exchange of pulpits with the late Dr. Stewart Carter of Cambridge, England.

He has been a member of the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association and a member of the Fellowship Committee for five years. He is the author of two manuals of meditation—*Speak to the Earth* (1955) and *Impassioned Clay* (1964). For ten years he has had a weekly radio programme, "Window on Harvard Square."

Mr. Helverson is married to the former Wynanda Vanderzee, and has two sons, John Norman and Donald Eric. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

JOHN ROWLAND
Publishing Officer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must thank those persons who have pushed me along to do this book. One is Professor Nancy Whittier Heer who urged me to do it and helped me at the start. Another is the Reverend Mary Beyer Sumner who helped me in various ways and was always encouraging. The text would have more errors than it does were it not for the able eyes of the late Priscilla Gough Treat who could spot a misspelled word at fifty paces and whose thoughtful reading of the text and her suggestions have improved it considerably. My assistant Olive Dennet Berg has helped me in more ways than I can ever remember. And I must thank my wife, Wynanda, whose frank comments are often right on target and her strong support keeps me going. Finally I must thank the First Parish in Cambridge who offered me a sabbatic which allowed me time to focus on a single project for a while.

I owe much to many authors, more than I can ever remember. The acknowledgements, as much as I can recall, will appear in the References at the end of the text. These listings follow the same order of the 93 brief chapters or essays in the text. There is an Index at the end to help give the many essays a certain cohesion.

Ralph N. Helverson

INTRODUCTION

This little book is about thinking in relation to religion, especially about religious claims to truth that are not amenable to ordinary canons of thought. A great religious leader, for example, regards it as a mistake to subject "to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it." It will be the contention of these essays that there are no doctrines beyond and independent of human judgment.

Montaigne, that wise and insightful man, in his Essays wrote:

"Perched on the loftiest throne in the world
we are still sitting on our own behind."

That is a good place to begin. For no matter what claims we make about the transcendent in life, we are still sitting on our own bottom.

In response to claims about absolute truth, or about the transcendent, we must stop long enough to ask what is being said and how these things might be known. For we cannot get out of our skins and no matter who we are we must still speak from a human point of view. Whatever flights of fancy we have, it is we who are fanciful; whatever claims to truth we have, it is we who are making the claims.

These essays will make a distinction between the transcendent, which we may acknowledge, and what people say about it and what they may claim to mean by what they say. Schleier-

macher once said that "religion must be some intuition of the infinite in the finite" (Speeches, p. 148). The question is how to grasp this infinite in the finite and how to talk about it and what to say.

One approach is indicated by a quote I saw on a church bulletin board: "Truth cannot be originated; it is an existing fact." The contention of these essays is exactly the opposite, that there is no such thing as truth that just exists, that truth is rather a human invention. Where does truth come from? So many people are convinced that they have the truth. Some say "my truth;" others say "your truth," and some are so bold as to say "the truth." Truth is a word that is used to describe those agreements about what are matters of fact. But there is nothing more slippery than a fact, for a fact is what men say it is. It is indeed as a description originated by men. What is not originated is the earth and the universe, but truth is what we have devised in some systematic fashion to speak about them when learned, informed minds agree that it is so. Sometimes learned people make mistakes. And when this happens other learned minds happily correct those mistakes. This constant learning and correcting that we make over the centuries is what we call truth. Truth is as much a human invention as art or music or philosophy.

After one recognizes the transcendent as the infinite in finite it is not exactly helpful and adds nothing to call it the truth. As Wallace Stevens says in his Opus Posthumous. "Reality is not what it is. It consists of the many realities it can be made into." Exactly!

These essays take the position that we must keep asking what truth is, and urge to keep living in the questions. We need to keep asking how we may find a bit more truth, how to handle the contradictions of life and how to be sensible about all that we do not know. This does not mean that we will always be rational but that if we are to keep seeking truth there is no alternative to try to be rational.

To live in the questions does not mean that the mind takes the place of the transcendent. It means that we must live in the questions to keep premature conclusions from being declared the transcendent. To live in the questions is the stubborn attempt to keep the irrational element in life from dominating us overmuch. The champions of the heart over the head have a point, but it is well to remember what Mc Taggart of Cambridge University in England once said, that no one ever broke with reason but that reason broke him.

Living in the questions asks us to deal fairly with feelings about the transcendent. Some people feel so strongly that something is so, that they make truth claims about it. But people can feel strongly about something that is mistaken.

Likewise there are many people who feel that there are other ways of finding truth than the best use of our heads. So they feel that they have truth because Swami somebody or other said it, or some leader believes it, or some prophet declared it, and that there are higher grounds than reason for finding truth. I think it can be shown that these people are mistaken in their truth claims. The slippery use of logic and foggy thinking in

in presenting the transcendent is everywhere to be observed. But they might remember what Hegel once observed that the ultimate that transcends all rational distinctions is the night in which all cows are black.

Yet these claims about the transcendent above all rational distinctions are a dime a thousand. Each has some special revelation to tell about. All you have to do to understand is to cease questioning.

A good bit of this type of religion and revelations of the unknown is based on faulty reason, oversized spiritual egos and extraordinary popular delusions and foolishness of mankind. Much of it uses slippery language, the same sort of tricky use of reason that Locke noticed in his time:

"I find that every sect, so far as reason will help them, make use of it gladly; and where it fails them, they cry out, 'it is a matter of faith and above reason!'"

The point of these essays is that nothing in the attempt to find the truth of life is above reason. All answers are human ones, and nothing human is above being examined. These essays contend that we must stop talking of the transcendent as truth and start talking about it as what it is: the condition of the spiritual life, as that reality which humans must take account of in every creative phase of their lives.

Therefore, some of these essays have a negative work to do: to expose charlatans of the transcendent; to examine shoddy spiritual offerings; to expose oversized claims to truth; and to ask for a bit more humility about truth claims.

But there is also a positive intent: to keep asserting that there is an element of life that is beyond reason — the transcendent — and that it is no unreasonable statement to acknowledge this. There is always the cry, "I believe, help thou my unbelief."

If we cry out with Wallace Stevens, "We believe, without belief, beyond belief," we know the positive intent here — to reach beyond any immediate nailing down of the transcendent, to move beyond unwarranted assertions of the transcendent, to arrive at that place where we may know with Stevens that there was "a myth before the myth began" and that there will be myths after the myth ends. That is, we must face up to every creedal entanglement and to strive for that fresh statement which enables us to find what is real in our lives.

We do live with the myths, the "fictions," which means creations, in Wallace Stevens' poetry, and we may use whatever enables us to make a rich human relationship to the transcendent.

The point of these essays then is to do what the New Testament says to do: "test the spirits." As we keep a viable sense of the transcendent alive, we may face up to the purveyors of puerile insights and social manipulations under the guise of calling them truth.

To live in the questions is to know that though we claim to sit on the highest throne of heaven's revelations, we are really still sitting on our own behind. We speak from a very human point of view, and the seeking approach is to ask questions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Part One: Living without Answers

1. Unquestionable Answers
2. Keep the Questions
3. The Ultimate Answers
4. Humility before the Ultimate
5. On Negative Capability
6. On Feeling Compulsive about Beliefs
7. Recall to Reason
8. Living with Unanswerable Questions
9. The Age of Unbelieving
10. On Feeling You Have the Answer
11. The Fanatical Doubter
12. Living with Ambiguity
13. Deciding to Believe Differently
14. People of Words
15. The Undecidable Proposition
16. On Feeling Sure that You Are Right
17. Resting in Uncertainty
18. The Improbable
19. Is there only One Way to be Right?
20. Believing Non-Believers
21. Possessing and Being Possessed

22. The Unanswered Element
23. The Ability to Disbelieve
24. Begin with an Assumption
25. Rigidities in Non-belief
26. Confronting Settled Opinions
27. Two Kinds of Unbelief
28. The Spirit of Finding Out
29. On Living by Right Principles
30. Of Stars and Men
31. On Answering an Idea You Disagree with
32. The Theological Disclaimer

Part Two: Living with Incompleteness

33. On Dealing with Dangerous Ideas
34. On Finding out Things
35. Add, Do Not Correct
36. Reflections on Superstition
37. On Having Arguments
38. Virtues and Vices
39. A Note on Good and Evil
40. The Moral and the Ethical
41. Corruptions and Moral Growth
42. Impulses to Do Good
43. On Making Mistakes
44. Defining by Labels
45. Needing the Opposition We Reject
46. Pseudo-science and Pseudo-religion

47. On Being out of Favor
48. Spiritual Presence
49. The Divine in the Human
50. On Human Equality
51. That Other Part of Ourselves
52. On Standing for Something
53. On Questioning What We Do as a Nation
54. The Present Tense
55. Hunger for Magic
56. Speaking the Truth
57. The Questioning Attitude and Human Rights
58. The Ceremony of Intellectual Balance
59. On Having Your Own Experience
60. Realistic Fiction
61. The Attitude of Finding Out
62. What It Means to Live with Questions

Part Three: Living with Openness

63. The Possibility of Choice
64. The Doubleness of Man
65. The Center Is Not Weakness
66. When Does the Center Hold?
67. The Mood of Defeat
68. What Man May Become
69. Understanding Life Backwards
70. The True Age of Man
71. Living beyond the Question

FOREWORD

The one who tries to live in the question believes very much in having truth but he doubts that it is easy to attain. Facts are as slippery as a Maine seal, and it has been interesting to watch the manpower it takes to find out the simple matter of what happened to those tapes of Mr. Nixon. Just what is the truth?

When we turn to matters of abstract truth or religious revelations then the complications are multiplied. Yet the process seems to be the same. If there is truth it is humans who will find it; if there is a revelation it is humans who will declare it; if there is some God to redeem us it is humans who will tell us. The one who lives in the questions believes that there is no way to escape this human factor.

The position of these essays is that truth matters very much, not to say everything. Yet we very seldom have "truth" that does not need recasting.

Yet this is not to be deplored for it seems to be the way of growth of the mind and spirit. "Everybody wants to be somebody;" wrote Goethe, "nobody wants to grow." If life is to be meaningful we must grow, be as mature as we can, and accept the conditions of the human mind.

72. Dreams and Proof
73. Original Relationships
74. Religious Reality Is Dependable
75. To Be Religious Is
76. The Things that Endure
77. On Being By-passed
78. How Does Man Save Himself?
79. Things We Can Never Say
80. The Great Possession
81. Cosmic Religiousness
82. Keeping Fresh before the Mystery
83. This Is Religion
84. How Can Man Change His World?
85. Believing More than You Prove
86. The Attempt to Possess Life
87. On Trying to Manage the Universe
88. Those Problems Near at Hand
89. To Feed the Mind and Nourish the Soul
90. The Predicaments of Life
91. On Security
92. Fact and Opinion
93. The Final Stance

Conclusion: The Spirit of Living in the Questions

Some Words About Sources

Index

LIVING WITHOUT ANSWERS

THE UNQUESTIONABLE ANSWER

Religion has a double approach typified by two different types of people. There is first of all the fellow who feels that he has the unquestionable answer. He feels that he has the truth and he may write it in a creed. What is more, not so long ago, he clobbered you if you did not agree, and even sent you to be burned at the stake.

There is another typical approach to religion — the fellow with the unanswerable question. He is typified all through history as the heretic, the doubter, the one who says, "but on the other hand..." He may call himself an agnostic and sometimes, in flights of egotism, he may call himself an atheist to affirm that he does not wish to be taken in, to believe without question.

The fellow with the unquestionable answer is the most difficult to deal with. Especially difficult is the man who has a spirit that is intolerant, what Eric Hoffer has called the "True Believer" type who is reinforced by a group convinced that it has the truth. What a problem he has been all through history. How sure he has been of so many things that are just not so! What crimes he has committed in the name of truth. In recent times what crimes man has committed in the name of some racial or political position taken as absolute.

What a batch of contradictions we may be! The same Paul who wrote that homily on love in I Corinthians: 13 also wrote that if anyone taught another view of the gospel than the

one he taught was puffed up with conceit; or, as the New English Bible puts it, a "pompous ignoramus."

So the spirit of intolerance may live within religion itself! How hard it is to feel deeply about something and not to make our feelings the criterion of the truth of what we are doing. How hard it is for people to see that they may be deeply stirred about a position and simply be mistaken at the extremes of their feelings!

All through history, on the other hand, have lived the people with the unanswerable question. Put very simply they have an open attitude. They recognize that we live in a world of unpredictables. They recognize that anyone professing a faith that never wavers or changes, is simply confessing that he seldom thinks

To pose the unanswerable question is to have a spirit that wonders about life. It is the spirit that realizes the ragged edges of spiritual insight. How fragile are the speculative leaps into the vast unknown! And yet how important that we think and explore and let our minds leap up and deal with ideas. But the ones with the unanswerable question also are ready to admit that they may be wrong, though they never claim to have the truth. What is more, they seldom make the mistake of identifying the intellectual leap in religion with the love and spirit of worship that is the heart of religion.

The people with the unanswerable question are ready to discuss words, propositions, doctrines. They are quite ready to insist that the doctrine is not love, the idea is not spirit, that the grasp of some answer may too readily become a stopping

place rather than a temporary resting place.

The people with the unanswerable question know that there is a language of the heart that is not always in agreement with the language of the creed.

But in sum what the people with the unanswerable question say to us is this: So many things are possible to believe. Let us be humble about our assertions and not assume that our old ways are true because they are old, nor that new ways are true because they are new. Whether old or new, right or wrong, the spirit of religion lives in compassion, understanding, love, and not in unquestionable answers.

KEEP THE QUESTION

To keep the question is a far different attitude from living only in answers. But there are people who try to do just that, people whose watches stop at a certain hour and who remain permanently at that hour and place of growth. They do not wish to find out anything for they already have found out all they want to know.

To keep living in the question requires a certain spiritual resiliency; but too often there are those who wish to close off the questions, to arrive at some location of the spirit and set up housekeeping forever. It has been said of the proverbial man of Boston that he did not wish to travel for he was already where he wanted to be. Some people are already there in ideas. Whatever feeling of comfort this may provide it is the road to spiritual decay.

The poet Blake once said that "What is now proved was once only imagined." So we must think anew, imagine anew, and keep living in the question, and to know that our most sacred feelings were probably once heresies.

To live in the question is to keep the spirit of openness and inquiry. And it must do battle with our feelings of insecurity, our tendency to quit the question, and to set a boundary to further questions.

The spirit of living in the question is close to the spirit of science and great religion. For the story of man must include a long chapter about the persons who reject being pigeonholed with final answers. The story of man's liberty is the

struggle by legal and heroic means to keep asking the important questions and not to be shut up.

One of the most persistent problems of men is how to deal with the person who has a passionate state of mind. He ceases to seek truth for he is convinced he has it. He does not question for he thinks he has the answers. He never doubts for he is convinced of his total outlook. The danger for such people is that they cannot read their own hearts and they transform the noble attributes -- courage, honor, hope, faith, duty, loyalty -- into a ruthless prosecution of a commitment. People who have no ability to preserve the question sometimes lose their capacity to be kindly and compassionate. The basic rule for any literate man to learn is that he may be mistaken.

Civilization has had about enough of that mentality that has invaded every sanctum of society:

Theirs not to reason why;

Theirs but to do and die.

The man who has kept the question keeps faith with the spirit of truth. He has kept faith with what is most human and divine. The one who keeps the question is on the edge of human growth. He comes out of the old past with all its fears and looks to the future with all its insecurity. He affirms his relationship to the past but he knows that the other side of every affirmation is the question. And if he cannot always think just what the question is, he must preserve the conditions for it and the possibility of it -- and that is freedom.

THE ULTIMATE ANSWERS

A famous minister, in a typical preachment for today's college students makes this declaration: "The ultimate situations of life demand an ultimate answer."

Consider that for a moment, and you may be able to see that the "ultimate situations" do not demand ultimate answers. When we consider it, we may see that there are no such things as ultimate answers; not in science, for science is constructed along the lines that make such answers improbable; not in politics, as party corruptions have unhappily shown; not in religion where the conflicts of "revelations" and judgments at every hand bestir us; nor in any other life for we confront the relative at every turn.

One could be dogmatic and almost make an ultimate statement that there are no ultimate answers. At least I have not found them anywhere. Every answer seems to have a crack in it. And most truths seem to have a partial quality to them.

There are proximate answers in some areas of experience. Aircraft will fly if we meet certain necessities of air and time; and so on and on. But in proximate answers we keep finding that we must make adjustments. Aircraft are being improved all the time due to increased knowledge of aerodynamics. And the more answers the designers have in the creation of better craft and that pilots have in using them (many of the failures in flight are due to pilot errors) the safer flight will become.

But there are no ultimate answers in this or any other realm.

More nearly we meet proximate resolutions to human predicaments. Most life situations are not problems as much as predicaments. We do not answer a predicament; we resolve it. That is, we meet the requirements to move along; to do the best we can at the moment.

What this means is that when we come to "ultimate situations of life," whatever they are, we do not need answers but resolutions. We don't answer a situation; we answer a question. And there are no ultimate answers that I ever heard of that did not turn out to be limited and finite in one way or another. In fact we may come to see that so-called ultimate answers are an approach to issues which leaves us susceptible to very human and non-ultimate manipulation. And whatever the ultimate situations of life, purpose and meaning and direction are what we need. And what we are likely to get are not ultimate meanings, purposes and standards, but very human finite ones.

But they will be good enough to live by. We need a human word, a solid word of inspiration and purpose, something that keeps us going, that sets us upon our feet. But we need not make this more than it is and become too authoritarian about it. It is a human word, but in great moments of social purpose and meaning a human word is the word of God. Tillich was firm about this in his famous comment: "The word from the Lord is the word that speaks out of the depth of our situation." The word of God is a human word. What God says is what man says he says and that is the way it is.

Our so-called ultimate answers are very finite answers and they are most human and frail. And it is best if we remember that in this human predicament it is wise to seek to live not in the ultimate answer but in the living, vital question. If we lose the question and suppose we have the answer -- much less an ultimate one -- we are caught in a mood of dogmatic authoritarianism.

HUMILITY BEFORE THE ULTIMATE

One mark of sensitive religion is the humility to know when we do not know, to recognize limits and human frailty. The wise ecclesiastic put it this way:

When I applied my mind to know wisdom...then I saw all...that man cannot find out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

That is a good place to begin with the ultimate. It is so much more meaningful than the approach of those religious leaders who claim to know so much, who are also ready to tell you all about God and heaven and hell and give dates and times and make predictions and forecasts and to prescribe in detail what people should and should not do.

This whole approach of claiming to know so much runs counter not only to great insights of Scripture but of the facts of life as we can determine them.

Speaking of God, Job confessed:

Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;
and backward, but I cannot perceive him,
on the left hand I seek him:
but I cannot behold him;
I turn to the right hand,
but I cannot see him.

These great words recognize limits in knowledge of God. The words do not say that we cannot know at all; the Scripture is careful to note, however, when we come to the ultimate things there is much that we cannot find out. For we often pretend to know more than we can ever really justify. Yet we seem to repeat

over and over the errors of the mind. We define God, or attempt to, which should mean that we define ways the mind can think about a subject. For no one can define God unless he himself be God. We can however, demarcate, delimit, set out ways to think. We can talk about the limits of reason and the way reason can function. But define God we cannot do. And when people try it, we note how various are the definitions, indicating very little agreement.

But delimiting the issue is another matter. Here is a great delimitation of God by Alfred North Whitehead of Harvard:

God is that non-temporal actuality that men must take account of in every creative phase.

Now we can agree to that, for it sets conditions but does not define. It is a delimitation of the human discussion of the topic. It is what men must take account of -- but not what God is. Men cannot define God but they can never get away from the question, and must keep coming back to the issue. God is what we confront in every new phase of life, a spiritual, non-temporal reality that men cannot define but cannot ignore.

This seems to be the way things are with this topic. For though many thinkers claim to know, Scripture is firm, "he cannot find it out." It is a wise stance to know that there are some things one cannot find out. Once one accepts the fact that there are some things he cannot find out, one may work out an approach to reality that takes this into account. He is likely to be more humble and he may come to center his attention on what is central, on righteousness, on goodness, compassion and not only speculative impossibilities.

The great wisdom of life is to know how to think, and to live in that spirit that has made its peace with things it cannot know.

For once we admit that there are some things we cannot know, we may be free to find out more about what we can indeed know.

But even here there is a danger for it is easy to settle too fixedly what cannot be known, for that in itself may be a claim to a kind of absolute truth not warranted. For the limits of what may be known include not only what may not be known, but of that limit as well. For almost as bad as the arrogant definitions of the ultimate are the final prescriptions telling us what may not be known.

The thing we know for certain is that we are limited and reality is far more complex than we can ever fully penetrate. In this acknowledgment is the beginning of wisdom about ultimates, including God. For with that admission we may then turn to live in peace with our neighbors and seek in our limited ways to build a better community.

ON NEGATIVE CAPABILITY

The phrase "negative capability" comes from John Keats. He had gone to a party in Drury Lane with some friends and found himself in a "disquisition with Kilke on various subjects," he wrote. And he continued, "...several things dovetailed in my mind and at once it struck me, what quality went into a man of achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously -- I mean negative capability, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainty, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason..."

Keats' mind flitted to Coleridge, for example, and he believed Coleridge could never accept such limitations for he "would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the penetralium of Mystery." He could not tolerate uncertainty, or as Keats phrased it, put up with "half Knowledge."

For Keats the negative capability required only that he retain his sense of beauty -- and let go of every other requirement:

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

For many people the positive need is so strong that they fill every idea with completeness whether it is certain or not. They will tell you more than they have a right to tell. They ask for knowledge that they have no right to ask for. They make demands on the facts that cannot be fulfilled.

The negative capability operates to cause one to accept limited knowledge, half knowledge, not to make unreasonable demands on the mind and spirit. Such contentedness with limited knowledge often leads to more knowledge. Thus it is to be contrasted with the strong need for positive approaches, which often lead to negative results. One builds up a structure of thought that is not true to the human situation. Negativism begins to develop; doubts begin to feed back about this positive stance.

On the other hand, if one has negative capability, if he can be satisfied with less than the almighty truth all at once, he may gradually come to see more than the fellow who swallows some kingdom of "truth" in one affirmation. He comes to have openness of mind and imaginative receptivity to reality in its varied presentations.

Look a bit more at this lesson of negative capability. It does not mean that one never makes up his mind; it means merely that he does not make it up all at once for life. He will be open to growth and new ideas. If he is very firm on some things, he is not so firm on many others. Most likely his firmness will be in the spirit that holds life sacred. He will trust the surmises of his heart, even if the next revelation of insight contradicts his last solid piece of information. Negative capability is a stance of the spirit rather than a set of doctrines. It is the spirit of accepting life as it is rather than pretending it is the way you want it to be.

This approach has value to the spirit. One learns to live with half-knowledge without fear. He is a more mature

person who knows that in the kingdom of limited knowledge nothing is more important than a genuine insight of one's own. Genuine knowledge of a bug is more important than a bugaboo about the entire universe.

Life should be based on trust in its native active elements. One does not have to fret and stew over metaphysical systems, for it is very likely that they deserve more negative constraints than they get which is not to castigate the philosopher in man, but to remind us that before man the systematizer there is man the creature. Keats has the Thrush say:

O fret not after knowledge -- I have none
And yet my song comes native with the warmth.

ON FEELING COMPULSIVE ABOUT BELIEFS

Justice Holmes said somewhere that "When I say a thing is true I mean that I cannot help believing it." And Dorothy Emmet says that "When faith is present, it holds a sense of inevitability."

Each of these people finds faith to be a compulsive thing in which or about which one is helpless. And that is a disturbing thought -- that one is helpless before faith or beliefs that may come upon one almost unaware. Also what should one think of a person who does not consider the merits of what he believes -- but is swept off his feet by the fact of believing? What are we to think of people who believe in believing itself and do not ask questions about the quality or the meaning of what it implies, but only that it is compelling enough to sweep them off their feet?

It appears to me that there has been too much magic put into the fact of believing and not enough thought into the merit of what is believed. Whole generations of "true believers" have swallowed a lot of false ideas -- religious and political and psychological -- and have not enough stopped to question what they believed. The fact that they were true believers in itself almost stopped their thinking process. They did not ask questions but felt that something was true and then became helpless. They were swallowed up into a kind of "inevitability."

But all waves of the future, inevitability, conditions where one is helpless before an idea whose time has come, need to be examined some before one commits oneself.

For what too often goes on is that people become enamored with the faith itself and not what the faith may lead to. Some Americans are moved to the formula that instilled an attitude that is positive, by getting up and saying, "I believe" and leaving it open. But such formulas of "I believe" should have an object and we need to examine the object. Is it worthy of our belief and devotion? Is it really true and can it stand the social test? Is it helpful and can it be productive in our own individual lives and in the lives of others? These and other tests we may ask of our beliefs and not to fall in love with the faith itself. Faith is an attitude and it always implies an object which is belief. The beliefs should meet social tests. The faith does not have to, but until it relates to beliefs it is not exactly a social thing. Until it relates to beliefs there is nothing to believe or disbelieve. There is nothing true or false about it.

But the moment our faith leads to beliefs we need to examine those beliefs. For if one's faith leads one to believe some foolish thing, it is foolish no matter how strong one's faith is. The strength of faith is not a test of truth; it may only indicate that one is stubborn and rigid and unmoving, but nothing at all about the quality of what one believes. The fact that one feels helpless before a belief is not a criterion of its validity. For one may be mistaken as to the depth of his emotions.

RECALL TO REASON

We hear on every hand today the demeaning of reason and the exaltation of feeling, sometimes wild emotion, and the foolish things that are done in the name of finding truth by giving up thinking. It is a contradictory trail that leads to the jungle.

The Bible says, "Come let us reason together." But man today would say, "Come let us feel together."

There is the story of the woman who said, "I'll not listen to reason for that always means what somebody else has to say." And she was right about that. That is what reason is — listening to what somebody else has to say, the consensus of best judgment, the agreement that is hammered out over serious discussion. Reason is simply the instrument of man to try to probe the darkness of life and to find truth if he possibly can.

Granted that much of life is not rational; when we recognize that fact we are that much more reasonable.

We live in an age that denounces reason, that promotes the "feelies," and tried to unravel our social problems or personal problems and seemingly everything else by the sensitivity group method. No one should for a moment decry what is good in such approaches to life, but what is needed right now is a sense of balance instead of trying to solve all our problems by some encounter group method.

We know that reason is limited. Oscar Wilde once said, "Man is a rational animal who always loses his temper when called to act in accordance with the dictates of reason." But

such a recognition that we are sometimes irrational is not an argument against reason; it is merely a recognition that reason is limited.

What is the alternative? It appears clear to me that it is foolish to castigate reason unless one does not expect to listen to the argument against reason. It is a strange argument that uses reason to denounce reason! It falls into the same class as a student I heard who was unhappy with speeches. So he gave a speech which denounced words and speechmaking in general! But the student might have sung or danced his criticism -- not spoken it! And so with those arguments using reason. For it seems inescapable that there is no argument for reason or against it that does not presuppose it and use it.

There does not appear to be an alternative to reason. Even when we recognize that reason is limited -- as we should -- we do not declare an alternative to reason. To recognize the limitations of an instrument is not to declare an alternative.

When we act unreasonably -- as we will -- it is just a limitation in us. But a limitation in the use of reason is not an argument against it, but a demand for more of it. To discover how men are irrational (Freud) is quite a rational achievement. "The first lesson of philosophy," wrote Will Durant, "is to learn that men may be mistaken." Now there is a whole book more than needs to be said on this subject.

No matter how foolishly we act, we must try to think as clearly as we can and to state what it is that we think. For reason holds out to man a great hope -- that men who differ by

reason may come to agree by reason. And those who refuse to listen should hear a word from Ben Franklin: "If you will not hear reason, she will surely rap your knuckles."

LIVING WITH UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS

Wrote Thoreau in his Journal, "You conquer fate by thought." True enough, and there are certain conditions we can believe into partial existence -- love, for example, and fellowship and community. But what strikes me is the limit one soon meets. The trouble here is not to express an idea but to nail down a piece of reality with it.

A woman said to me, "You know there are so many questions for which we have no answers."

No problem is more vexing than that unsolved except it be the half-solved. The almos of life; the probabilities that are half uncertain; the things we feel for sure but must act on as if we were unsure and the other way round -- these are contexts of life that give us pause.

For what we face is the whole realm where one problem after another cannot be solved, cannot be ignored, cannot be lived down, but must be lived with.

We must treat some questions by managing, not answering them. We must manage a happy relationship between the persistent question that may indicate our confusion and the natural urge to latch on to an absolute answer that merely indicates our ignorance. Maybe manage is not the right word -- perhaps the metaphor of holding in balance is better -- a balance between a genuine concern and the tendency to leap to unwarranted conclusion. It is not easy to work out an approach to questions that live somewhere in the domain between the first word and the last.

For many intellectuals this is a pressing problem. If it is true as Goethe says that "whatever you cannot understand you cannot possess," it is also true that you confront more than you can understand. The human mind is always surrounded with more reality than it can ever grasp, and the human spirit reveals a range of life never confined in our neat rational systems.

In this godless but very religious age, men have more trouble with their "ultimate questions" than formerly. This is the age of longing -- for God and truth and reality -- and so it is very religious; but our age is one of doubt and uncertainty. An object of faith that is not illusory is difficult to find. The problem is how to state the problem of longing, how to live with the unanswerable questions, how to move beyond a mere fellowship of seekers who walk in such a way to keep the tension alive in thought, not falling into the futility of souring on the human predicament and that other futility of thinking one has answered the ultimate question.

Somewhere in this balance there is vital life and faith.

THE AGE OF UNBELIEVING

A man is recorded in the New Testament as saying to Jesus, "Help my unbelief." And it is a very modern prayer for we live in the age of unbelieving.

How do we help one who asks for help with such a question?

We can do one thing that may be of help; to accept such a person in his unbelief. For we are all unbelievers in the sense that if we believe one thing, we cannot believe the opposite. Not if we expect to make sense. It is a healing thing to be accepted in our unbelief.

By accepting a person in his unbelief we make way for his growth and our own growth too. We are then able to provide a community of believers; believers who accept non-believers.

For if the person is genuinely seeking, he does not need fixed answers; and if he is not genuinely seeking, no answers will be forthcoming.

What is this context of believing? It is to share our unbelief with him. I like the story told by Elie Wiesel of a young man studying to be a rabbi who went to his teacher, a rabbi, and said, "Rabbi, I cannot be a student any longer. I do not believe in God or the Bible or the Talmud. I have so many doubts. How can I be helped in my unbelief?"

The teacher said, "I will tell you a little story. When I was a young man studying to be a rabbi, I had so many doubts. How can I be helped in my unbelief?"

The teacher said, "I will tell you a little story.

When I was a young man studying to be a rabbi, I had so many doubts that I went to my teacher and I said, 'Rabbi, I can not longer go on as I have. I do not believe in God, or the Bible. What shall I do?'"

"And my teacher said, 'I will tell you a little story. When I was a young man studying to be a rabbi, I had many doubts and I decided that I could not go on to study to be a rabbi. So I went to my teacher, a great and beautiful man with a flowing white beard and fleecy white hair, a saintly man, and I said, 'Rabbi, teacher, I am sorry to come to you for the purpose I have in mind. But honestly I cannot go on to study to be a rabbi. I have many doubts. I no longer believe in God or the Bible or the Talmud.' The great teacher looked at me with compassion in his eyes and he said, as he put his arms around me, 'I must tell you a little story.....'"

What is it that every man faces but the struggle to find genuine faith and belief? And we discover that most often it is in the seeking, in the context, in the search that we find our way out. We may not find a lasting answer, but in the knowledge that others are in the same predicament, in the awareness that others have doubts, and sorrow and pain and uncertainty -- in that knowledge we can bear up and go on, even without certainty.

Unbelieving man today is the language of God; God struggling in man who is trying to find his way, to keep his faith to generate beliefs that deal with our world. Our doubts are merely our way of seeking to keep related and open.

We can relate our unbelieving to a real world of meaning. Of new values, and so long as we keep sensitive, we may

find that our very unbelieving is leading us to new belief. Our atheism is leading us back to God. Our doubts are leading us to affirm. Our lostness is causing us to be found. And always our community is made up of those people who accept us even when we feel rejected. It is then that we may pray with Aldous Huxley:

Cherishingly tend and feed and fan
That inward fire, whose small, precarious flame
Kindled or quenched, creates
The noble or ignoble men we are.

ON FEELING YOU HAVE THE ANSWER

Two kinds of people are to be found in the world. The first are those who are seeking some answer to the problems of life. The second are those who feel they have found the answer. These two are about the major line-ups.

The occasion of this judgment is a little blue book sent to me by its author. I receive all sorts of things in the mail. Some of the things I receive are most helpful, some of them are merely amusing. This little blue book falls into the latter class. It also falls into the class of those declarations that have the answer for mankind's ills.

Read this title page for example: "Humanity's Guide to Everlasting Prosperity and Peace." That is the title. Here is the blurb for the contents: "here is power to free humanity... here is the great, positive, practical, program for universal prosperity, security, peace, that America needs. Here is the best and easiest way out of depression, unemployment, money-troubles, taxation, and war." If only the author had added family problems and religious bickerings our troubles would be over! Such revelations, said Samuel McChord Crothers, usually occur about 4 o'clock in the morning.

Strange is the power of the absolutist notion that grips some people. In so many areas of life -- religion, politics, money schemes, health, etc. -- people become convinced that they have an inside track, what amounts almost to a revelation of the truth. It obsesses them. This man says: "All of the world's troubles, turmoils and dangers exist only because of

ignorance, and can be swept away with nothing more lethal, or costly, than the education provided by these pages." So there!

The pitfalls of the absolutist are easy to point out. We know that evils of our human association are due to more than our ignorance. We know also that men do evil deeds because they are led away by the desires of their hearts. We know that men can be clever and diabolical, learned and cussed at the same time. We agree with Socrates that knowledge is virtue, but we must not forget how much of knowledge is not virtue. Men serve Mammon not only out of ignorance but out of greed. Men can be led as far astray by what they know only too well as by what they do not know.

What else do men need in addition to knowledge? Very much indeed but this for sure: a disposition to grasp the complexity of human life; a readiness to admit that one may not understand all there is to know; the willingness to note that in the mercy of God one may be mistaken about what he does know; a love that will help heal the wounds of mankind; and a dash of humility not to claim too much for one's panaceas.

The author writes, "This book has little documentation and needs little because it does not deal in questionable facts. Not questionable to whom? Does he not know that a fact is about as slippery as an oyster? And does he not know that a fact is what men say it is? And what does he say to those who disagree with his facts?"

THE FANATICAL DOUBTER

The fanatical doubter is one who thinks with a closed system of ideas and not with openness to ideas. He closes his eyes to all but what his system indicates he should believe and do. Consider this statement by Arthur Koestler in the book The God That Failed. As a former Communist he wrote: "My party education had equipped my mind with such elaborate shock absorbing and elastic defences that everything seen and heard became automatically transformed to fit a prescribed pattern."

His doubt was the counterpart of his belief. His fanatical doubt became a disbelief so bold and daring that it was another faith itself.

The trouble with the fanatical doubter is that he is a fanatic whereas the true doubter is a seeker. The true doubter says what it is that he questions and is seeking truth. The fanatical doubter declares another proposition, beginning with all that he denounces. If there are contradictions he squirms around them; if there are crooked pieces of thinking to arrive at a conclusion he covers them over; if there is opposition he tries to use it and not to answer it. The mark of the fanatical doubter is that he doubts all proclamations but his own. Which means that the fanatical doubter turns out to be a fanatical believer. The chief mark of the person is the fanaticism, the attitude, and not the doctrine itself.

Koestler saw the errors of his ways and left for more open and freer ways of thinking.

It is not easy to maintain a free, open, questing attitude. It is easier to move over into the declaiming mood, with its negative, the doubter mood. Sometimes we may feel that the fanatical believer is all right but the fanatical doubter of our own special cause is not all right. But they are two sides of the same approach.

What we need are members of the open society, who are capable of entertaining a new idea; who are able to think about ideas they disagree with; who are ready to find out what truth there may be in a cause that may actually for the most part be false and are ready to point out the falsehood in a position that may on the whole be sustainable.

What we call truth is a slippery animal and no man has a full grasp of it. People who are so cocksure that something is not so, are about as impossible to live with as those who are oversure that things are what they say they are.

Some radical doubters approach to religions is a total disbelief in all of them. But when we confront a radical doubter we need to probe what is the faith that is the other side of his doubt. We talk of radical doubt of certain beliefs. Yes, but the doubts may be instrumental to some other belief. Scratch a radical doubter and you will find a true believer.

But the genuine doubter, the seeker, that is another creature entirely. He has balance and judgment and is tolerant and fair and is seeking. He does not claim to have found the answer. The fanatical doubter is proclaiming another faith if you will look at it. In terms of this faith he doubts.

Modern fanaticism is often rooted in extreme doubt. And the answer to it is not a more universal doubt but a more basic use of judgment and reason -- to be fair, to be ready to listen, to seek, to keep from being hooked on narrow systems.

LIVING WITH AMBIGUITY

Life has an element that is obscure, dark, vague, ambiguous. An anxious conscience in many persons urges them to prefer the real to the possible, the clear to the vague. They want life put in neat categories.

Yet such precision, such exact lines of thought, may cause a person to give up going any further into an idea. He becomes satisfied with his achievement. What he needs is the insight to see that things are more ambiguous than he may have thought.

The person with authoritarian doctrines in government can be rather hard to live with. The reason is that liberty always deals with the realm of ambiguity. To hear contrary points of view, to arrive at something of a fair decision -- this is not easy to do. The whole domain of democracy is a country of ambiguity. But that is part of its glory. The point of democracy is not to be right according to some theory, but to be fair and promote justice. It is to give every person a hearing, knowing that all these things and more lead to ambiguity. But as Churchill wrote, democracy is the worst form of government except all the others. The others are too unambiguous.

And if we think of the liberal way in religion, we confront a large realm of ambiguity. The ambiguity hangs on a central emphasis of individual decision. This means that each central doctrine permits wide differences. And even where liberals agree, it may be for one or another of many reasons. But this very ambiguity keeps them looking, thinking, and ener-

getic. They never rest content with a final achievement. The very words they use to create meaning separate them from the reality to which they refer. Paul Tillich uses most of his third volume of the Systematic Theology to discuss the ambiguities of life. No matter how much we may declaim, or claim that we know life is still ambiguous.

We hear it said, "Liberals never know what they believe." This criticism carries a grain of truth -- for liberals do not know absolutely. But instead of taking the statement as a blow it may be taken as a compliment. Does one know precisely about God? Does one have unambiguous ideas of heaven and hell, of salvation, of a person's relationship to the eternal?

The trouble with our world is that there are too many people who are too sure of too many things. Their world is too neat for the reality we face. And in this universe of possibilities it is easy to become too rigid. One needs to believe and doubt, to affirm and deny, to agree and to dissent.

The world is not a neat object to hold in one's mind, but a slippery creature that we only half know and never fully apprehend. There are more dark, enigmatic realities to life than most of our dogmas allow. We need to accept more heartily the ambiguity of life and to realize that dogmas that do not take vagueness of life into account reveal not only the absence of thought but the end of thought.

Whoever would be a servant in the kingdom of liberals, let him prepare his soul for ambiguity. But let him know that

this is not the end of life, but that kind of acceptance of life's contraries -- that penetrating examination -- in which life can begin.

DECIDING TO BELIEVE DIFFERENTLY

The decisive thing about the human world lies in that subjective fact about us -- how we decide to hold our beliefs. We might reasonably conclude that earth, air, fire and water, that the sky and planets remain stable no matter what we do. Most important so far as the human is concerned is what he decides to believe about his place on this planet and what his life means.

Beliefs have toppled through the centuries. Man was created in a decisive moment; or man is the product of a slow evolution of the species. Only one religion is true; or there are numerous acceptable ways to experience the religious dimension of life. The earth is flat; or the earth is elliptical or round. There is a God somewhere "up there;" or there are various ways to speak of God. Christianity is the gift of God to man through a Saviour sent to the world; or Christianity is a human attempt to explore the full range of man's sensitivities, and prophets and seers have helped him do this, not the least of whom was Jesus.

Through the decades and centuries people decide to believe differently. Gradually a conception persuades a people and they call that conception "truth." But history is filled with "truths" that once claimed people's allegiance but are now held to be absurdities. In some long time ago an idea was held as a vision of a prophet, a rebel against society; then long after it is abandoned, his view is defended in a last ditch stand by some reactionary. In the meantime society has moved to another area and people decide to experience and believe differently.

All this is not a mad sea of relativity, for what man believes is related to a community of mind, of agreement, of his working together at this nerve center of his being. Surely what we accept today will be revised. What we believe is not absolute. Still it is reliable, dependable and we can manage.

Yet it is humbling to note the changes that have occurred: The cosmology of the early Christians so beautifully stated by Dante, the rich world of polytheism of the Greeks, the rapid disintegration of jungle religion under the impact of modern civilization, and so much else.

The abiding thing we know is that what we hold as truth will change with time. And yet there is this to remember: It is humans who do the believing. It is their heads and hearts, their brains and souls, that inspire change. Uncertainty they know for certain. They may run from this uncertainty into the common accepted illusions which cover up reality for them.

T. S. Eliot says man cannot stand much of reality. Perhaps not. I am inclined to believe, however, that he can stand reality much better than sham. If he can face the reality of life, then he can experience the vitalities of the process of change and growth, of the vigor of life, of the glory of being alive, and be eager to learn every step. He needs to learn that he does not have to stand at some bulwark in a last ditch stand over some "truth." "Civilization," wrote Toynbee, "is not a condition but a movement; it is not a harbor but a voyage." Who can tell what we'll believe in the future? And isn't it an exciting question!

MEN OF WORDS

Scripture says. "In the beginning was the word" but that is probably not the case at all. In the beginning is the substance out of which words come -- experience, deeds, acts.

The deed is a more primitive response of life than the word. The word comes later at a more advanced level and then it is more decisive and determinative than experience for it shapes experience of the future. "Men of words -- priests, prophets, intellectuals" wrote Eric Hoffer, "have played a more decisive role in history than military leaders, statesmen, and businessmen."

The role of the men of words is more decisive because they determine ultimately what others do. Copernicus, for example, was a man of the word -- a scientific, mathematical word. He was rejected, forced to recant his word, and his books were on the Index for 209 years after they were published. But he has had the last word. Today not only have his words been removed from the Index, they are solid conservative doctrine.

It is often so in history. Jesus came on the scene, an interloper, a self-educated man, a rural man rejected by both factions of Judaism. But he was a prophet who spoke a word of condemnation of evils and a word of hope for the down-trodden and distressed. He was treated shabbily. He was tried for trumped up evils and convicted and hung on a cross in cruel death. But his words were heightened by this incident and his influence is probably greater than any one who has ever lived.

Men are shaken out of their course of deeds by a new word of power. Wrote Walter Bagehot, "one of the greatest pains

to human nature is the pain of a new idea." That fragile thing, a conception, is powerful like a seed sprouting and breaking forth through the soil.

An idea does not automatically have a time. But when other ideas prepare the way for its development, then it may be correct to say with Victor Hugo, "No army can withstand an idea whose time has come." It is when the mood is ripe for a further development of an idea that a new idea can be a mighty force to contend with.

Political ideas that led to democracy; the communist idea that furthered our social thinking about collective needs; the scientific ideas that furthered medicine such as the concept of bacteria, the circulation of the blood, anesthesia; and such revolutionary scientific concepts as gravity and relativity. Abstract ideas have a mighty force on the practical affairs of life.

What the British confronted in 1775 was an idea, and the idea was as hard to fight as were the men behind trees and down back roads. And the Americans found that when they went to Vietnam the nationalist allegiances there were as difficult to deal with and overcome as the British found those of early Americans.

Who knows what word will change the future? But we know that out of our experiences and research, out of the new contacts of one nation with another, of the new religious understanding, will come the word that may shape our lives in powerful new directions.

The word is not from the beginning; but a new beginning happens after a new word.

THE UNDECIDABLE PROPOSITION

In 1931 Kurt Godel published a paper that shattered the hope of finding an axiomatic system in mathematics that is provable and consistent. Godel showed that if one finds a certain consistency it always has an undecidable element to it -- the assumption that is made. This means that the proof hangs on an assumption that is itself not proved.

What Godel found in mathematics we must acknowledge in religion, what we must come to recognize is that if proof is wanted then the religion we come up with is certainly limited.

What we face in religion is a long tussle between two points of view: one is the impulse to make grand leaps into the blue yonder and tie it down with a proof. We have heard of the proofs of God's existence; but the trouble with them is their basic confusion, failing to acknowledge in religion what Godel did in mathematics. If we are to make grand leaps in religion and talk about God -- and I think we should -- we must give up the notion that we are talking about elements of life that can be proved. They cannot.

For what we are dealing with in religion is what philosophy has long recognized; that the arguments in philosophy are based on assumptions that themselves are not based on arguments. There is this undecidable element that is at work in religion. Man's spiritual projection is always exceeding his proof-grasp. He lives in a whole realm of extrapolations that have no solid ground to stand on except the human one.

There is another tendency in religion. It is to limit the range of interest in religion to the human and compassionate. There is some good in this approach. It recognizes that the life of a man is confined to this earth, to himself, and that it is silly to try to proof-leap beyond it. This viewpoint urges us to remember that in all our talk of God it is men and women talking. If we say that God is this or that; that such and such is a revelation of God -- it is men or women who said it. So we find ourselves in the predicament of Godel's skepticism. When we talk about getting away from ourselves, it is we who are talking. And so long as we keep talking, the strong suspicion is that we shall be tied to what we feel and think and are.

We should recognize that not all of life's vital interests can be proved -- a poem's meaning, the grip of love, faith's surmise. This, however, should not be an invitation to run wild in abandonment of reason and good sense; but it is a recognition that the categories of logic do not contain the full range of man's interests. If, as in mathematics, we can never prove a theorem except by going outside the system, we must recognize that in religion there is a strong argument to go outside the system, and yet not to expect proof. To do this is not to fall into Hume's charge that "all poets are liars" but to acknowledge that there is a depth to life that cannot be contained in theorems and logic.

So we can say that religion makes two demands of us: That we feel perfectly free to use poetry and images and prayers

and songs, that we project and speculate and have visions and dreams of a new world of meaning. But at the same time we should not expect that we can nail down every dream and build logical foundations under every vision. For behind the most solid proofs that we have there are metaphysical foundations. Let us not forget that we have not proved these metaphysical foundations even though we use them.

ON FEELING SURE YOU ARE RIGHT

One of the common attitudes of many persons is that they have the unquestionable answers. They feel sure they are right about many things. They know exactly for whom to vote; they never have any doubts in religion; they are quite certain that what they believe is the truth of the matter. They would not understand St Paul's famous statement: "I know in part."

Such people feel a deep urge to declare that they know in wholes; they know all that they need or want to know. They are like a woman on a jury who was asked to look at all the facts of the case and replied that she did not wish to look at the facts because she wanted to make up her own mind. Such people's minds are already made up. They have unquestionable answers, and their answers tell far more about themselves than they do about the issue.

This type of person is a sort of extremist. Ask him about anything where his feelings are involved and he will declare right off what the answer is.

Sometimes he is more moderate but just as firm; he is the authoritarian in history, the person who takes absolute stands and refuses to budge an iota from his position. He will not look at the facts for they may disturb these absolute stands.

But there is that other type of person: the person who leans more to the unanswerable question than to the unquestionable answer. There are so many unanswerable questions; questions of God such as: "Canst thou by searching find out God?"

It is worth considering that this question is not easy to answer. Humility might be the mark of the religious person. Yet this mark of humility is charged as being of weak faith, and if one expresses the tentativeness in words he may be charged with being a heretic. Some people call themselves agnostics in the attempt to keep tentativeness part of their outlook and there is much to be said for them.

How often do we swing from one extreme to the other; from the atheist who declares there is no God to the absolute theist who declares there is a God. Each claims to be right.

We know that such feelings are more in the realm of attitude than in truth. Yet right at this level lies the most stubborn conflict in religion: the warfare of skepticism and faith, of doubt and certainty.

Perhaps we need to take a second look at the absolutisms of the human spirit. What shall a person do? Shall he approach life with unquestionable answers, declaring his way through life, swaggering here and there with his dogmas and doctrines? Or shall he never come to any decision at all except the one that poses more questions that are unanswerable? There is a conflict that goes right to the root of how we shall live.

Suppose we truly took St Paul seriously and said that "we know in part." This could mean that we do know. We know some things for certain so that we can live and get along and function well. We know psychology, science, geography, human relations and so much else. There is much that we know, though it is in part.

We can be certain enough to live effectively yet not so rigidly that we grow a shell around our ideas to protect us from life and growth.

We can realize that uncertainty is the lot of human life. This need not mean moral decay, but a strong recognition of the fact that people need courage to live in this world. Our certainty can lie not so much in our infallible beliefs as in our total devotion to find out, to live as best we can and to try to love and serve and become real persons. And that means that we must learn to live with the probable, the little we do know for certain, the best we can do for now.

RESTING IN UNCERTAINTY

The capacity to be uncertain -- and not be too unhappy about it -- is a gift of the spirit.

The extent to which people are free is their capacity to rest in uncertainty. For freedom is not an end, but the means to an end that is not always visible. Freedom is not an answer but the means to find answers.

We might distinguish reliable knowledge from absolute knowledge. Much that we know is reliable, workable, helpful, but it is not absolute, certain for all time. Yet it can give security, a base of exploration and thought that is enough to live by. "Absolute implies freedom from relation to or dependence on anything else." Such words may be all right for space, time, or magnitude, although even there I think the use of the word may be questioned. But when we come to what men know in philosophy and religion then we may be less sure and still secure. We can have reliable knowledge that does what we need to have done.

There are two types of people. In the one the certainty is the end that is taken as final; in the other the certainty is the approach while the end remains uncertain. Secure in their minds, they may rest insecure in the object of the mind.

Look at it another way. Any kind of certainty of object or end that may be arrived at is some kind of bargain with the intellect. That is, one has temporarily been fooled; has arrived at a position where one may act as if one had what one assumed.

Look at it further. If we set up all sorts of reasons for arriving at some absolute position, we need only remember that all reasons rest on assumptions which themselves do not rest on reason. All our arguments begin with assumptions which themselves do not begin with argument.

The sum of the matter is this: One may indeed convince oneself that one is certain. As Thoreau said, "It's as hard to see oneself as it is to look backwards without turning around." Truth is beautiful but so are illusions. What we need is that inner tolerance in our minds where our reason is free to do battle with our own errors. This implies a comprehension of further truth which is a higher power than the defense of some closed system. Reason does not have to mean what someone else has to say; it could mean what we have to say to ourselves. Life is almost inevitably judged with the blindness of life itself. But if we know this, and if we accept it, we can rest in uncertainty. There is great peace in this.

THE IMPROBABLE

"Man can believe the impossible," wrote Oscar Wilde, "but man can never believe the improbable."

What many religious people want is the impossible. They crave it as an alcoholic craves wine. Give them the impossible and they will believe it. It has only to be far away, or if close, then a mystery, and if not a mystery then incomprehensible.

How often in religion what we do not understand compels us, fascinates us, binds us and all too often destroys us. The ability of mankind to love delusions is one of those dimensions of human psychology that is often neglected in the schools.

It is one of the amazing feats of mankind that nonsense can be stretched to infinity. In religion if the clergyman gives an explanation that borders on the intelligible he must be sure to fit into the category of the non-rational. For example, the bread and wine on the altar become the actual body and blood of Christ -- that is the ultimate foundation of the whole impossible business. That this doctrine can be believed in this year of our Lord is enough proof that any attempt to persuade the masses of man to a rational religion makes too much sense ever to be believed. In this century of extraordinary popular delusions and the madness of crowds it does not have a popular chance.

The deepest instinct of man drives him to make a commitment. In the minds of our mass age a commitment usually follows the word "ultimate." Mankind wants the truth, to be finally

sure. He cannot understand the probable, the partial, the human -- if these refer to religion. Religion somehow must contain for him the impossible.

And yet -- and yet there are people who think about these things, who are ready to accept the probable, are willing to listen, who try to use reason and attempt to limit themselves to believing just one impossible thing before breakfast. They are fascinating company.

IS THERE ONLY ONE WAY TO BE RIGHT?

Reading the other day in a work of theology I came to this quotation from David Hume: "Among a thousand different opinions that men may have on the same subject, there is but one just and true, and the only difficulty is to ascertain and fix it." This conviction is pretty deep in our culture, that on any subject there is but one just and true opinion. How men acquired this predisposition to look for the one and only true opinion, I do not know. Perhaps it was from our mathematical approach to reality. It is quite proper to go to the laboratory and look for an exact duplication of an experiment. The duplication in mathematical statement is one of the evidences of proof.

But does the same approach hold when we come to religion and art and music and a dozen other subjects? In answer to that question we need to distinguish between the reply which says all approaches are equally valid and the answer that says there are valid ways to differ. The "one just and true" approach to things absolutizes a limited aspect of our world. The approach of religion does just the opposite; it confronts the absolutes of life and tries somehow to get a foothold on them. The difficulty is that men climb on to religious reality at different places, due to innate tendencies, family background, cultural inheritances, and the like. When one examines the various religious approaches, the more he comes to see that "the one just and true" attitude toward truth does not apply. There is much in religion that is less true or false, than adequate or inadequate, life-fulfilling or life-denying, which renews man or thwarts his deepest strivings.

BELIEVING NON-BELIEVERS

Hume who gave us the above quotation also said this: "All poets are liars." And in this he is right -- from the kind of truth he was describing. If one has the view that there is only one true opinion on something so vast as the life of the human spirit, then a poet would be the grandest of all liars, for this is the one assumption that a poet cannot accept. As one reads the psalms, the liturgies of a commanding religious view, the poetry expressing our deepest aspirations, he is made aware that life is not a narrow-headed enterprise which may be incorporated into one, and only one, true opinion.

Can we not accept the view that truth is important, so important in fact that we should dedicate our lives to finding it, and to defending and re-stating the things we have believed to be true? Yet can we not see that the kingdom of truth has many mansions, and that these mansions differ not because they are antithetical but because they are broken glimpses of the eternal? Surely in a universe so vast, in a world so complicated, with cultures so varied, with human minds so limited, surely in that kind of a world there is more than one way to be right.

Said Hawthorne of Herman Melville: "He can neither believe nor be comfortable in his unbelief." This is a condition of millions in this age who hunger for faith, but are still unbelieving. Our categories have been cut; we have been tossed into a new age, and longing for belief has taken the place of belief itself.

What shall a man do in this case? He can do one of several things. In the first place, he may rest in this state of uncertainty, as many do. Hammarskjold, for example, in his Markings, rests in uncertainty. The mark of the man is an uncertain faith. Many of our time rest in their uncertainty, content that this is the lot of man. Not strong believers, nor strong disbelievers, they rather long for belief. It is an honorable position.

Or there is another thing he may do. He may close the mind -- and with a Kierkegaardian suspension of the rational -- take a big leap into the absurd. Some do this, some of the so-called very bright ones, who use their intellects to give up the intellectual struggle. An argument can be made for this approach. It is for example, a fact of life that a reasoning person must begin all arguments with assumptions. Therefore, we should not expect that the assumptions will begin with arguments. It is necessary to begin somewhere, to plunk down some things as starting points, conscious or not. The justification for the approach, in part, is that it is hard to know an absurd

assumption from one that is not. And if one has already suspended the rational, one may never know.

There is still the next possibility that one may declare firmly that one is a non-believer. The trouble with this position is that it is hard to know when one is dealing with disbelief or only another less rational kind of belief, just more vehement, with some of the usual hesitancies removed.

There is still another possibility, among many, that we may resolve this believing and non-believing tension, by another approach to the objects of religious concern. We live in this age of the new physics, space, chemistry, biology, and the new philosophy, and I think we should accept them. We cannot go back to some other age when our problems were simpler. Yet the same heart of man exists, the same need for believing exists, the same need for assurance is there.

For most of our lives, for many of us, the approach will have to be a treading of the route to faith by that attitude of the early disciple, "I believe, help thou my unbelief."

POSSESSING AND BEING POSSESSED

There is a difference between being in a passion and a passion being in us. It is comparable to the difference between having an idea that is stirred by emotion and an emotion dominating an idea. Blake said this long ago:

To be in a passion you Good may do,
But no Good if a Passion is in you.

This is the difference between having an idea that is stimulating and living only in stimulation that may have a tinge of an idea.

It is easy to see that a human is vastly more complicated than his ideas or his passion, for it is their combination that causes the difficulties.

It is the old battle of the head and the heart. If the head has an idea and it also moves the heart, you have one kind of program; but if the heart has a stirring and it is hard to find the idea, you have something else again.

This old struggle of possessing an emotion and being possessed by a passion is rather common to this hour. For the causes are legion that have moved the passions and one looks around for the idea in vain. One looks for the thoughtfulness of the passion, the continuity of it, the service of it, and too often all that is graspable is the passion.

Passions can lead us astray as they did the Germans who did not do enough to question and challenge Hitler. But as well those who have nothing but head knowledge, can be rather deadly where the heart needs to be moved. In such cases there is

not usually enough emotional charge to get people moving again, to change routes when it is necessary to do so, to move beyond some stationary place that we have fallen into. The head without the heart is not a very stimulating aspect of life.

What might appeal to us, when the head and heart may lead us astray, is an idea that sets us upon our feet, that orients our minds to direction and purpose, gives us something to hold to, but also this: it moves us enough to cement a tie of the head and the heart so that we are inspired, moved.

And the great thing here is that we have an idea and we are in possession of a passion that moves us in terms of it. We are a mind inspired, we are kept busy by going by the passion that is related to it.

It is this difference between possessing an emotion and being possessed by an emotion, just as there is a difference between a person who possesses alcohol in taking a drink or two and a person being possessed by alcohol and becomes an alcoholic.

What we have not enough understood is that this same sort of relationship exists in the mind and the emotions. There are people who might be called emotionalcoholics -- they are possessed by emotions as a man is possessed by drink. They cannot help doing what they are doing, for with them it is a kind of abnormal possession. If they ever chance to get into a good path it is by accident; for they have lost the direction of their lives. They are victims of whatever captures them and focuses that emotion.

Nor have we understood enough the think-line of reason that pulls man. His reason is persistent, though faint, it is ever there, but it is weak in comparison with the passions which possess people.

Paul Valery makes a gloss on Descartes with the comment: "Sometimes I think and sometimes I am." But those times when we just are, that is when the problem arises. Just as we are is not a neutral wonderland of just being. It is a passage for whatever wildness catches us.

Every person has a seesaw in his life -- we are in the passion or the passion is in us -- and the thin layer of civilization that we have is the triumph of some order and meaning and thought over wild passions. On that simple triumph lies the future of civilization. For man is also a thinking animal -- and that demands that he keep thinking and asking questions.

THE UNANSWERED ELEMENT

One may observe these days that men and women are eagerly in search of something which they do not have. We may observe this characteristic of mankind in its quest for material things, for material things are much easier to gain and keep than achievements of the spirit. But in the hunger for some achievement of the spirit we see other marks of people in our day: this need to have something other than cars and houses and money, if we are to be whole persons. To arrive at some such attainment is the great possession, but the moment we have it we know that we cannot keep it under lock and key.

It is difficult to capture the spiritual life and maintain it, for in the very process of holding it we may warp it. And if we hold on too long to a certain attainment we may corrupt it or violate it.

Still we can gain the spiritual life if we do not try to be too precise. Was it not Joubert who said, "It is easy to know God so long as you do not tax yourself with defining him." Fixed definitions may set limits to our range of feeling and thought. We cannot capture the spiritual life in a definition. For the secret of the spiritual life is that we are always losing it just as we get it. We have it and yet we do not fully have it. We think we have arrived and yet we know that we have not yet. T. S. Eliot said that every ending is a beginning.

And that's the way it is with the spiritual life. Yet the very knowledge that we cannot capture and possess the spiritual life in some creed or form or some insight of yesteryear is

itself a kind of satisfying possession. We face questions that the nature of life determines we cannot answer, but that religious awareness of life's predicament is itself a kind of answer. We learn to bow with reverence before the enigmas of life.

Man always walks this road, precarious and uncertain as it is, between having and not having, knowing and not knowing. The very nature of the spiritual life determines that to stop is to fall, just as riding a bicycle requires that we move to stay up.

The great possession is not the material things we have, though that is not to be despised, but the possession that we are. Life is always a kind of progression. There is no place to stop. There is no place ever to outgrow the need to keep on growing. There is no place that we can ever shift what we are to what we have. "Let your possessions be as one, two, three," said Thoreau. Though your possessions be as 99, 100, and 101, there is great need to focus on the primary thing — the possession that we hold in our minds and hearts. And what we are is determined in part by a deep hunger of the soul. If we have found our soul, our center, then we can accept all other uncertainties and proceed with the life-long quest for what we have not yet found, in firm faith that we have found ourselves.

"When the gods wish to punish," wrote Oscar Wilde, "they answer our prayers." Yes, that would be a punishment of a kind for it would mean stagnation. But life at its best has an unanswered element in all its quests.

John Drinkwater's poem on the soul begins:

Dull soul aspire:
Thou are not earth. Mount higher
Heaven gave the spark; to it return the fire.

THE ABILITY TO DISBELIEVE

We usually think of the man who disbelieves as the one who has problems. We may try to convert him or tell of what our belief is. But do we ever stop to think that often the problem that we face in society is the man who has no ability to disbelieve? He believes too easily; he swallows too much; he has no ability to reject ideas that are false and he cannot get rid of habits that have captured his imagination.

"Infidelity does not consist in believing or in disbelieving," wrote Thomas Paine, "it consists in professing to believe what one does not believe." Did we ever think of that as a problem -- professing to believe what in reality when we examine ourselves, we do not believe? There seems to be a marked inability on our part not to believe certain things.

Put it another way, some people know things not to be true and yet they will believe that they are true.

We know for example some of the things we do and eat and put into our mouths are not good for us -- smoking and drinking too much -- and yet we seem powerless to stop doing them. We know that it is not true that smoking will do for us all the glorious things the advertisements say they will, but we are powerless not to do it. We are caught in the habit of belief and action. We know that if we smoke our total enjoyment of living will be less; we know this, but are powerless to disbelieve it.

If we turn to many other areas of life we find the same inability: People believe doctrines and some of them harmful or exclusive or based on prejudice and stifling of the mind -- and yet people seem powerless not to believe them. So easily we get into ruts, acquire habits and slip into practices that are destructive, but we seem unable to escape them.

In fact one of the remarkable failures of men is their constant belief in things that they know are not so. If you pin them down, if you really force them to face something, they may give you a grudging acceptance of some criticism. But they cannot believe it, though their minds tell them it is so.

Their heads seem to tell them one thing and their feelings another. Or put this another way: Reason tells them one thing and habits and customs tell them another, and they go ahead all through their lives believing things that they know are not true.

Just imagine what a revolution is due in a person's life when he faces up to the things he does not believe. He will have to face not only intellectual criticism but dishonesty, and lethargy and his double mental and emotional life.

It is a clear and fine day in a man's life when he ceases to believe things he knows are not true. On that day he begins to be a man. On that day he acquires a new honesty. He may have given up a whole tradition of something or the other, and to that extent he may be the poorer for it, but he will be honest, and that is a great gain. Genuine honesty will lead him straight back to genuine community, based on what he can believe.

There is nothing finer than a man who cannot be bought for some intellectual price. It is good to see a person who cannot be purchased, boon-doggled, and led like a lamb to rational slaughter.

BEGIN WITH AN ASSUMPTION

We all begin with assumptions of one kind or other. Hitler began with the assumption that man was chattel existing only for the state. How does one answer Hitler? It may be possible to answer him point by point in some logical manner. The trouble with this approach is that at any point one may so easily be refuted. For man often is mean and despicable. How does one deal with the exceptions?

There is another way to deal with such arguments. Let us begin with another assumption, a biblical one: "So God created man in his own image."

This assumption is the religious approach to the spirit of man, and on the basis of it no quarter will be given to the like of Hitler. The theories of race and blood are rejected on an assumption about the nature of the spirit of man. Man is related to an immense journey by which he has come to be what he is, to that unknown destiny which is his quest for being.

So we begin with an assumption that puts integrity at the heart of life; not a set of accepted rules to follow or not, but a stance of the soul, so that one sees life as more than flotsam and jetsam on the stream of existence.

The greatest safeguard to a state is a continuing community of persons who begin with such an assumption. They do not try to argue human dignity from some other premise. They do not try to prove human dignity in a laboratory experiment. They make a great religious affirmation. At any one point it is irrational,

for it may be refuted in specific instances. But all assumptions are irrational in the sense that they are not established by argument. Yet on the basis of this religious affirmation rationality may be sustained. For we know that the basic unity of the stable community is a stable self to respect, and self-respect begins in a noble assumption about the self. Wrote Tolstoy: "As soon as I acknowledged that there is a force in whose power I am, I at once felt that I could live." Indeed!

RIGIDITIES IN NON-BELIEF

"I think the Second Vatican Council is an illustration of the lack of faith in our time." The man sitting in my study who made this comment was himself a non-believer, a former Roman Catholic. He added, "If they had not lost their faith they would not be having this Council."

"Not lost their faith," I objected, "but taking account of new realities that faith must confront."

He would have none of it. He could not grasp the point that a vital faith must find new beliefs for our time -- for the Catholic no less than the non-Catholic. Is the seeking for such beliefs, such understanding, a lack of faith? On the contrary, can it not be put another way -- that if modern man did not seek for new beliefs commensurate with the expansion of knowledge and deepening awareness of the nature of man, he would lose all his faith?

Some people think that if one changes his beliefs it is due to weakness, or loss of faith. They seem to think that if one changes a concept of God or Jesus or whatever, one thereby degrades the concept.

Such an approach has an assumption behind it: That at one point in history beliefs arrived at a peak of perfection -- a form of the paradise concept -- from which only a downgrading, a "fall" could take place. But one could make an opposite assumption: That beliefs struggle forth like man himself from the "mud and scum of things" to arrive at resting places, but not final stopping places.

How often we hear it said that this is not the age of faith. This is so only on the assumption that all faith speaks in narrow sectarian language. Considered all round, what age of faith is so great as this one? The exploration of space; the creation of the United Nations; the attempt to encompass the world in new visions of peace and cooperation; the beginnings of council among the religions of mankind; are these signs of weak faith?

People who equate changing beliefs with a loss of faith are asking for the old shibboleths, the old war songs, the rigidities of an unchanging creed. That kind of religion belongs to a time I hope is gone forever.

One of the surprising things about this non-believer was his refusal to permit me to hold a different set of beliefs from the ones he would allow me. Non-believers do not like to have a clergyman move freely in areas not marked out for him. They like to reserve these domains for themselves, neatly pigeonholed and as rigid as any fundamentalist theologian I ever met.

There is another chapter to be written about the orthodoxy of our skeptic. He wished to make it clear that he himself had no religion. But he wished also to make it clear that if I had any religion he would declare to me the basis on which I could have it. So there! It's like a professor of philosophy who taught me in graduate school. He grew up in Texas, had long since lost his religion, but if one did discuss religion he knew it exactly; fundamentalism in Texas!

There is no one so rigid as a pure logician. The trouble with him is that he cannot deal with life which is not pure, nor can he accept the idea that there are more fuzzy edges to all systems than we may have allowed for.

CONFRONTING SETTLED OPINIONS

Some time ago I loaned a book to a scientist. I had been talking about this book, Nature and Man by John Perkins Marsh, published in 1864 and recently re-issued by Harvard University Press. The scientist said that he was skeptical a writer could say very much a hundred years ago that a biologist could follow today.

"Would you say this of Darwin?" I asked.

"Well, I will look at the book," he said.

When I brought the book to him, his first comment as he leafed through the pages was, "I tried to look up the man who wrote this, to see where he got his training, where he came from, to see if I may learn anything from him."

"I thought to myself, "How very unscientific this process is. He is to determine the truth of what is being said by who says it. He prefers to investigate not the ideas but the man who said the ideas."

His response is one of the oldest of the human race. There is a persistent disposition to put people in pigeon-holes, order them as they ought to be, and then you can get on with your business. As old as man is the trait that settles the nature of a new prophet by asking, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?"

We all have settled opinions that new ideas must confront. Each new advance in civilization must meet experts who say it cannot be done, or who advise against it. Experts in road engineering said that barriers between lanes in high speed

motorways would increase fatalities, though the actual fact is that they have considerably lessened fatalities, and cut down on accidents.

To have settled opinions on dozens of things, unconscious assumptions they are, is true of all of us, scientists as well, though in the best of the scientists there is an openness to truth from all quarters.

But finally there is nothing to be trusted but the truth, if we can find it. This slippery creature is hammered out over the years by experts and inexperts alike; and when the experts finally agree that some innovation is the truth, they will do it not by finding out who made it (for he may be an unheard-of), but by examining the evidence, to see whether in fact it is so. If one wishes to begin his research by asking who did what, that is his pleasure, but he will have to come back to something more relevant. He will have to remember that the air age was ushered in by a couple of boys tinkering in the back yard while experts were saying it could never happen.

TWO KINDS OF UNBELIEF

One type of unbelief is born of earnest search for truth. One doubts to learn, holds in question ideas and doctrines for further investigation. Another type of unbelief is born of an exact opposite attitude; the unbelief that refuses to look, refuses to ask the disturbing question, the unbelief that is cocksure that there is no other "true" belief but its own.

This latter type of unbelief advises its adherents to enter no other church, read no other Bible than its own, participate in no other service of worship than the prescribed one. Unbelief of this type protects itself from any probing in the form of doubt and question. Here it speaks through Luther: "So tenaciously should we cling to the word revealed by the Gospel, that were I to see all the Angels of Heaven coming down to me to tell me something different, not only would I not be tempted to doubt a single syllable, but I would shut my eyes and stop my ears, for they would not deserve to be either seen or heard."

Think of what a powerful unbelief this is, an unbelief in his senses, his reason, and the very call of the angels of heaven. He would disbelieve all this to keep on believing what he has learned from the Bible. I say this is a powerful unbelief, and should we be able to pitch the unbelief toward some sacred doctrine, the orthodox would accuse Luther of the rankest heresy.

He is guilty of heresy nevertheless. He was as guilty in this one instance as were the holy gentlemen of the era who refused to look through Gallileo's telescope. Imagine what a

tremendous unbelief this man must have had to uphold his position. There comes a point where the unbelief of some traditional Christians should be given more weight than their belief. Surely it must take most of their energy and religious impulses to keep unbelieving all the things they must not believe. If we should reckon their faith in terms of believings and unbelievings, we should have to call them unbelievers.

Man is a strange animal; the only one so far as we know who is endowed with reason in his peculiar sense, but perhaps also the only one who comes to the conclusion that he must pin his hopes on things so unreasonable. Unbelieving he goes through the world: see not this which the ideology condemns; touch not this which the party line eschews; taste not that which is taboo. What a schizophrenic religious world exists all around us -- a world that refuses to be baffled by contradictions, disheartened by obstacles, disturbed by the absurd. It accomplishes this ingenious feat by the route of unbelieving them, by denying their existence. At such a juncture religion is not only ridiculous -- it is dangerous.

THE SPIRIT OF FINDING OUT

"There are people whose watch stops at a certain hour," a wit once wrote, "and who remain permanently at that age." They do not wish to find out anything else; they have already found out all they want to know.

One of the great dangers to the human spirit is this closing off the further question. We arrive at some place and set up housekeeping forever. Some people feel they are already there in ideas. They have arrived, they say.

This may give them a feeling of comfort, but it also provides the opportunity for decay.

The story of history must include those people who reject being pigeonholed with final answers. The story of man's liberty is the struggle by legal and heroic means to keep asking the important questions -- not to be shut up. While the pressing issues of our day are political and not theological, even so we may come to see that the right question is its own kind of answer.

One of the most persistent problems of men is how to deal with the person who has a passionate state of mind. He ceases to seek truth for he is convinced he has it. He does not question for he thinks he has the answers. He never doubts for he is convinced of his total outlook. The danger of such people is that they cannot read their own hearts and they transform the noble attributes -- courage, honor, hope, faith, duty, loyalty -- into a ruthless prosecution of a commitment. People who have no ability to preserve the continuing question sometimes lose their

capacity to be kindly and compassionate. The basic rule for any literate person to learn is that one may be mistaken.

The person who has kept the spirit of finding out keeps faith with the spirit of truth, with what is most human and divine. The person who has the spirit of finding out is on the edge of human growth. He comes out of the old past with all its fears and looks to the future with all its insecurity. He affirms his relationship to the past but he knows that the other side of every affirmation is a question. And if he cannot always think just what the question is, he must preserve the conditions for it and the possibility of it -- and that is freedom.

The poet Blake once wrote, "What is now proved was once only imagined." So we must imagine anew, think anew, keep the spirit of inquiry and know that our most sacred feelings may once have been heresies. The spirit of finding out is the spirit of openness, of freedom, inquiry. And it must do battle with our feelings of insecurity, our tendency to close off inquiry, to set a boundary to the question and to make secure all that has been. Every genuine thinker tears time asunder, but he may put it together again in a vital new way. The spirit of finding out is close to science and close to the finest in the religious spirit. It is the spirit of prayer and quest.

ON LIVING BY RIGHT PRINCIPLES

We like to think that we are men and women of principle. To live by principle means that we live by a fundamental law and truth or motivating force on which we may base all our acts and deeds. To be a person of principle, many believe, is to have a rule of conduct and to see into things as they are. It is the foundation of integrity and truth and morality.

That is the way we talk about principle. "Be a man of principle," we counsel young men. Which means that we must be men of integrity and know the truth and nothing but the truth, so help us God. The fundamental things about such principles, we feel, is that they are unchanging, eternal.

But we meet a practical problem with regard to such principles. We find that other men have principles that disagree with ours. And Dorothy Sayers is right: "The first thing a principle does -- if it really is a principle -- is to kill somebody." When we become convinced that we are absolutely right in principle, we tend to forget that others may feel the same way about their principles. Conflict and war are bound to occur. Shining ideals may lead directly to war and bloodshed. Holy crusades are the bloodiest of all. The doctrine that is held absolutely destroys the believer as surely as it destroys the unbeliever. How hard it is to distinguish an idea of the absolute from an absolute idea.

So the questions seem inevitable for us: How do we live in this confusing world? Can't we live by principles at

all? Where in this mixed-up world can we take our stand? Shouldn't we just plant our feet on our absolute principles and say, "Here I stand. I can do no other."

Yes, one may do this providing one brings another great idea into play. This is the idea of compromise, or, as we may word it another way: Live and let live.

If we think of politics, we know immediately that we must compromise to live in peace. Sincere people disagree on what is to be done, on how to do it, on who should do it, how it should be financed, and so on. Standing on some moral principle like a prophet on Mount Olympus declaring the absolute truth for all time is a bit disheartening to people who know that the only way they can arrive at steps of progress is to engage in the give and take of discussion plus a necessary compromise. People in this democratic world can get things done only a step at a time. They must work together and have the intelligence to realize that a little way toward a goal is better than a fight and a shattering of all hope for improvement. The healing and helpful way to live with people is to give and take, to understand and to compromise.

There is something immature about the person who stands in a kind of moral vacuum and declares absolute principles with no compromise. The only thing that saves such a person is that action on the principles may not be demanded. The minute one tries to act, narrowness will be revealed. To talk this way does not mean that one has lost one's ideals or vision, but that one realizes that to achieve anything at all, one must take the next step before one can take the last one.

The radicals of our world are often irresponsible, even though their irritations may spur them to new thought. They help us to understand a viewpoint, but they do not necessarily help us to act on it. We often use the phrase, "We agree in principle," but we find that what we agreed to in principle we cannot do in principle. We have to work along each part, one step at a time.

It would be a mark of deeper democratic understanding if our people realized that senators and congressmen must often do things that are not their ideal or their religious vision in order to get anything done at all. The principle we need to act on here is not our private vision of what we feel to be the truth, but our public responsibility to do something.

OF STARS AND MEN

Many people in America at this time are convinced that the stars control their destinies. They would not listen to Shakespeare's character say,

The fault...is not in our stars
but in ourselves.

No! Both success and failure are in the stars for many in our day. It's the great capitulation! It is the new sign of the breakdown of real religion and of rational judgment. It is the transference of human failings and success to forces outside the human.

The disturbing thing about astrology is that it is an indication of a falling-away from real religion into a superstition as old as Christianity and older. Amiel expressed it a hundred years ago: "The unbelieving epochs are the cradles of the new superstitions." And that seems to be the way it is -- there comes a time of unbelief, a period of falling away from tradition and affiliation with a religion. Now one might suppose that this is a great time of reason and individualism. But not necessarily -- it may be the exact opposite, a time of new superstition. For superstitions are cradled in the times of unbelief and falling away from religion.

It is that the people's hearts and minds are empty of vital belief, have little feeling about religion, no clear ideas, no commitments, and in that mood of uncommitment and disbelief, they are the victims of whatever gets to them.

And it is just here that the stars have once again become the superstitious way that many express their faith. It is a type of irresponsibility and capitulation, that our destinies are in the stars and not in ourselves.

This was the very thing that caused Augustine to write such hard things about astrology. What he said will have to be said over and over as these periods of the falling away from established religions proceed apace. Augustine writes:

"Nor can we exclude from this kind of superstition those who were called genethlicai on account of their attention to birthdays, but are now commonly called mathematici. Of these, too, although they may seek with pains for the true position of the stars at the time of our birth, and may sometimes even find it out, yet in so far as they attempt thence to predict our actions or the consequences of our actions, grievously err, and sell inexperienced men into miserable bondage. For when any free man goes to an astrologer of this kind he gives money that he may come away the slave either of Mars or of Venus, or rather, perhaps, of all of the stars to which those who first fell into this error, and handed it on to posterity, have given the names either of beast on account of their likeness to beasts or of men, with a view to confer honor on those men."

"...But the desire to predict the characters, the acts and the fate of those who are born from such an observation is a great delusion and great madness. And among those at least who have any sort of acquaintance with matters of this kind (which are indeed only fit to be unlearned again, the superstition is refuted beyond the reach of doubt."

And toward all such predictions, and divinations, there is a strong word of scripture: "Even if what they tell you should come to pass, hearken not unto them."

ON ANSWERING AN IDEA DISAGREED WITH

We have heard a lot about this age being too rational, too cold and scientific, and that what we need is feeling, to be sensitive, to touch, and all that. But if what happened at Harvard is an indication of anything on a rational level, then the plea for feeling is also a step backward into the dark ages.

The issue centers around an article on intelligence in an issue of the Atlantic Monthly, written by Professor Richard J. Herrnstein of Harvard. He holds that intelligence is largely genetic, though not exclusively so, and that society tends to reward people with differing degrees of success in life depending on ability. He believes that society is moving toward what has been called a "meritocracy," based on intelligence and success, the achievements that go with intelligence.

Now either that idea is true or it is not. But what is so shocking for a community that boasts some of the world's leading scholars is to know that students and some faculty members sought to answer the proposition, not by answering the idea, but by attacking the man who stated the idea. They sought to have the professor fired. His classes were disrupted; he was personally attacked, and he was deliberately insulted. These are well known totalitarian tactics. This same type of action was also observed at the University of Georgia when Professor Shockley, a defender of views similar to those of Herrnstein, spoke there.

For this to happen at Harvard is shocking. One would have thought that we had won the right to present

unpopular ideas without being personally attacked. But evidently this is not so. So we must go right back to the beginning again. The way to answer an idea you disagree with is to answer the argument, not the man. One would have thought that we had learned that two hundred years ago. But evidently each generation must learn it all over again. And especially in this irrational age we must especially re-learn it. To paraphrase George Bernard Shaw, each generation is a fresh invasion of savages, whose passions and intensities must be molded in socially accepted channels.

Jefferson said it long ago at the beginning of this republic: "Error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it." He said that in his inaugural address in 1801. Isn't it a pity that we seem not to have learned that lesson even now? Instead, a group of well-meaning people have resorted to political approaches to intellectual arguments. If you don't like an idea a man presents, you answer it by firing the man who made it.

When the search for truth is challenged by political means of intimidation and by disruption and insult, then we should realize that the foundations of our objective search for truth are threatened. Then we are dealing with people who have ready-made answers to complicated questions, and the atmosphere they create is one of authoritarianism.

"Be led by reason," said Solon. But it is a difficult order. It is so much easier to follow passion, interest, prejudice and causes. To try to follow reason does not mean that we can

always do it; it only means that there is no alternative if we are to find truth. Man possesses no other avenue to truth superior to his best use of reason. And if passion and prejudice often dominate in the name of reason, then it requires better reason to point out that fact. The answer to a mistaken idea is for men to point out the mistake. That is the way science has always operated; and there is no other way for philosophy or religion or any other discipline to do the job.

And let us not forget that what Valery said is sometimes true: "Our most important thoughts are those which contradict our emotions."

THE THEOLOGICAL DISCLAIMER

Frequently heard today is the comment, "It makes no difference what people believe, what religious commitment they have, for the facts are all the same." There are many varieties of this disclaimer in theology all the way to the total negation of any belief whatsoever. The things that are important, it is said, are science, politics, technology, business, and getting on with the vital things of everyday concern.

This comment finds a certain agreement in us, especially when theology concerns itself about beliefs that we feel are irrelevant to our everyday problems.

Yet in some respects theology is a vital concern to all of us. It concerns us because behind all concrete actions there are abstract concepts. The abstraction " $E = MC^2$ " stands behind the nuclear age. The abstraction "the rights of man" stands behind democratic politics.

Behind most things we do there is an abstraction. And so in religion. A dramatic instance of this was the discovery by a young archaeologist near a pyramid in Egypt of a ghost ship -- a ship in which the king was to sail to the promised land of religious hope. The ship is thirty-three feet long and fully equipped for its voyage. There it has rested in the subterranean passage for nearly 5,000 years. It may now be seen in the Cairo Museum.

From one point of view it made no difference what the Pharaoh believed -- the ship did not move from its place, and he did not sail to the promised land. We might therefore judge that it made no difference what he believed.

But that judgment would be only part of the story, for in another respect it made a great difference what the king believed. It caused him to have men dig the place for the ship, have the ship built, and to have it placed in the passageway. And this belief caused other men who may have needed a good ship to leave it alone and let it rest in the tunnel.

We must distinguish the personal from the social theological disclaimer. Nothing is more foolish than to ignore beliefs as if they are above noticing. Right this moment we must deal with national differences and customs based on belief. Problems of outcasts, of population limitation, the rights of lay people, and, as Professor David McClelland of Harvard indicates in The Achieving Society, national characteristics in terms of achievement, are shaped by religious beliefs. So many differences are shaped by theological beliefs that it would take an encyclopedia to note the volume of them.

Let a person make a personal theological disclaimer as he pleases. That is religious freedom. But let him also remember that we live in a world of over three billion people and which is moving rapidly toward four billion. That world we are coming to will be shaped by abstractions, and some of them will be theological. Of that we can be quite sure. We need not only discretion but responsibility.

11

LIVING WITH INCOMPLETENESS

Right conclusions are more likely to be gathered out of a multitude of tongues than through any kind of authoritative selection. To many, this is and always will be folly: but we have staked upon it our all.

---Judge Learned Hand

FOREWORD NOTE

Living in the questions is the attempt to listen to people, to try to hear what is being said and to respect differences that are fairly presented.

The person who lives in the questions tries to move beyond his favorite doctrinaire positions to respond to the person as well as to ideas. Ideas may be true or false, exciting or not, but to live in the questions requires a certain excitement about real people who have their own questions and are seeking.

The people who live in questions do not have any final solutions to present, but they have willing hearts and eager minds and are ready to risk change in themselves, to promote growth, and to respect differences. The metaphor of the questioning community is not the melting pot but the mosaic. Each difference has its own character and in the multiplicity there may be no final human solution; but equally there is no human resolution at all without respect for this process.

ON DEALING WITH DANGEROUS IDEAS

A dangerous idea is one that men fear. How often men have feared what is different, what is unknown, what is called radical as if it possessed demons (maybe at times it does). Men seek to protect their interests, which include the ideas they do not fear, the old familiar ones. Such conservative protection has often proved to be a mistake — in science and religion and politics.

The world has been a long time learning the lesson of Thomas Jefferson, that the best way to answer a bad argument is to give a good one.

One example of this bad way to handle dangerous ideas may be illustrated by an action of the Senate of the United States. The story is told by former Senator William Benton. The Library of Congress was begun with the purchase of Thomas Jefferson's library from his bankrupt estate for the sum of \$25,000. "But," says Benton, "few realize that every graduate of Yale, Harvard and Princeton in the Congress voted against the appropriation because so many of the books in Jefferson's library were deemed to be dangerous."

Another common procedure to deal with dangerous ideas is to attack not the idea itself but the man who proposed the idea. The examples of this procedure are legion, the most recent being the student attack on Professor Herrnstein at Harvard when he published some research that had racial implications. He was insulted and harrassed in that long tradition of answering an argument by attacking the proposer of it.

How should man respond to dangerous ideas? He will accept his fear of them -- Nazi racial theories, for example -- and at times his anger and his rage at the stupidity of mankind. But he will try not to lose his composure as he deals with one-cause people, those who move in a certain way almost as if they were programmed by computers.

He will further be informed by a certain religious wisdom that teaches that left to themselves many things will go sour. Men often become self-seeking opportunists and are overly pre-occupied with themselves. The poor are no better in this respect than the rich and there are more of them.

The one who must deal with dangerous ideas will have a special concern in our day for we must respond to the mass media, which is at once making us aware of the world by the pictures it presents, and the manner of it, making us more primitive and nervous.

So we must go back to some old wisdom about dealing with dangerous ideas. The beginning of self-possession and balance is to be found in the liberal stance: reasonable debate toleration of differences; the encouragement of the examination of ideas and the answering of arguments with arguments; to be patient enough to remember that if a case is misstated there are plenty of people who will in due time point out that fact.

There are negative things in this regard: not to expect that all problems and fears of ideas will be resolved this year; to realize that many things are complicated and connected; not to believe that loud noise and yelling is a criterion of truth

("use soft words and hard arguments"); not to expect that you can hide truth under a pronouncement to the contrary; not to be so politically pious and secularly self righteous; not to fear the future but to trust in informed minds left free to discuss and debate, that they will make a future as viable as the past.

And finally to realize that the history of mankind is an endeavor to be free. We are only free when we know how to deal with dangerous ideas: not to give in, not to cover up, not to shift the debate, but to sort out the truth in a civilized manner and to absorb it in our further human growth.

ON FINDING OUT THINGS

Reading along in a work of history of Greek thought I came to this sentence from the Greek philosopher, Xenophanes: "Truly the gods have not from the beginning revealed all things to mortals, but by long searching mortals make progress in discovery"

What a discovery that was! This philosopher was born about 750 B. C. How far he was ahead of his time! He said that the way we find out things is not by revelation but by human discovery. That was a great declaration in the age of gods and revelations and all sorts of magic and superstition.

But it would be so in any age and the message he brought is a lesson we must seemingly learn over and over again.

Here is another translation of this same idea expressed another way: "No man has perceived certainty, nor shall anyone perceive it, about the gods whereof I speak" Let us stop there a bit and reflect on that statement that too often too many people have been too definite about these ultimate matters. "...no man has perceived certainty" and yet people all the time claim to be so certain. People declare what is the whole truth as if they were adding two and two. Truth about anything can only be established when an informed group of experts agree that it is so. Truth may be much more but it is never less.

Xenophanes goes on: "...all things are matters of opinion". Unless one has a good laboratory and is dealing with a subject that can be tested in a laboratory, then this is a

good place to begin. He writes further: "What I say is an opinion resembling the truth." What a fine approach this is to subjects of debatable validity. For too often when people speak of truth they are declaring their own vision, or some fancy, and in moments of candor frankly say they are expressing matters of opinion. But to declare that one is expressing an opinion is a good approach to create the atmosphere of the vital questions that lead to truth.

Then Xenophanes goes on to say: "The gods did not reveal all things to mortals in the beginning; but in the long searching man finds that which is better." This is a great insight to have come from so long a time ago. With that judgment a modern intelligent person can concur. This ancient thinker defined the approach of the seeking mind, the questioning spirit, and defended a viable way of finding out anything. He belongs to our time in this regard.

A choice comment he made about religion is so relevant that it may be quoted here: "The gods of the Ethiopians are dark-skinned and snub-nosed; the gods of the Thracians are fair and blue-eyed; if oxen could paint, their gods would be oxen." Of course, and how inevitable! If one is to think of God in this personal manner then Xenophanes is right. It is only in our time that there are new approaches to the transcendent that keeps it as a viable concept without defining it as personal or exactly. As is quoted elsewhere, Whitehead stated a good approach to this method: "God is that non-temporal actuality which must be taken account of at every creative phase."

Preserve the transcendent: For all of us are pensioners on this actuality, this planet, this universe, that sustains us with the elements of our existence. Humans need a reference in life to keep them oriented and also they need philosophers such as Zenophanes to keep reminding them not to duck responsible thinking by ducking into some revelation.

ADD, DO NOT CORRECT

There are two contrasting attitudes toward life that make a difference. One is to go about correcting oneself, repenting, being sorrowful for what one has done. It is the attitude of one who is always looking into his mind and spirit and finding the inspection not good.

The other attitude is quite different. It goes through life adding new elements to what one has done. It is a bit like Montaigne who wrote his essays and let others do the correcting. He went ahead to write new essays. Something of that spirit must be in every man. There are new essays to write; the very word "essay" means to try, to attempt. Let us be up and at the work we have to do. So we have made mistakes and who has not? Life is filled with mistakes. And there are always people willing to point them out to us. Montaigne said of his writing: "I do not concern myself with spelling, and simply order them (his correctors) to follow the old style;" or with punctuation: "I am not an expert in both."

Here is a man who knew that he had limitations and accepted them but he went ahead and added to what he could do. He could write essays as few men ever have been able to do. He did not turn back on his essays wondering if they were all that they were supposed to be. He did add to them, over and over and over. He put in quotations and insertions to add life to his essays.

Every man must do something like that with his life.

For if one is bent on correcting all his mistakes will he not make more mistakes in the process? And instead, then, of dealing with life as it is to be lived, he will be dealing with life as it was not to be lived. This is like driving a car where one made a bad turn or did a faulty passing or was inconsiderate. To drive well we do not rehearse those errors. We concentrate on what to do well. "I must not do that again," we say to ourselves. The intention is not a correction but a determination that in the life we have to live we shall do the best we can on the next stretch of road. Life is always like that; we add, we do not correct.

I suppose a case could be made for saying that in adding we are correcting — and that is true enough. But the attitude is forward-looking and positive. The outreach is the act and the next step.

There is a reservoir to life — all its history and past experience, its long ancestry and its treasury of instinct and memory. We are the products of a million mistakes as well as successes.

Yesterday I saw a school of fish — little minnows they were — and of the hundreds of them only a few will survive. A fish has to live now and grasp what is possible in its brief span. There is a sense in which man is like that. He does many things for no good reason that he can give. He has drives and desires and ambitions that are born in him out of his past and out of his environment. What is good for him? What is vile for him? Man lives with various responses in his time.

It is important never to give up the questioning mind, the seeking spirit; but beyond the search there is the necessity to act before all the facts are in. It is a fact that a man can never wait for all the facts. He can live and try to be kind and compassionate. He can try to be reasonable and fair. He can go on and write that essay that demands his hand and spirit.

REFLECTIONS ON SUPERSTITION

"Superstition," wrote Edmund Burke, "is the religion of feeble minds," and he was wrong about that. Superstition is not the religion of a feeble mind, but the false answer to an empty heart. Some people who are superstitious have very good intellects, but they are lost by misdirection and warped content. These people wish to manage the universe, cannot trust reality as it is but wish to manipulate it for their own private ends. Such an outlook is not the mark of faith, but of trickery, and an indication of emptiness. Its antecedents are as old as man. The book of Deuteronomy says of people of the seventh century B.C., "They sacrificed to devils, not to God." St Paul said to the Athenians, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious." If the men of Athens were too superstitious with all their philosophic background, you can imagine how the rest of the world fare.

It is, moreover, a foolish notion to think that people of intellect and sophistication do not fall for superstition. For superstition is a mark not of those who are non-intellectual, but rather of those who are unfulfilled, who have lost their vital faith. Some of these new superstitious people despise religion but fall for various airy nothings that have far less foundation. Take astrology for example: This belief supposes that the relative position of moon and stars influences human affairs. The late Harlow Shapley, Professor of Astronomy at Harvard, says in his book, View from a Distant Star,

"As an astronomer I am sometimes asked, 'But isn't there something to astrology, something valuable?'"

"Sure," I say ungrammatically, "there's indeed something in astrology -- a good many millions a year paid by dupes to the charlatans who trade in superstitions."

To answer the intellectual argument does not answer the person. For people who need this superstition are already empty and lost and faithless. They are members of an unbelieving generation who turn out to have a remarkable need still to believe. They are illustrations of the fact that when the gods go the half-gods come; when the temple is cleansed and left bare the demons arrive.

The skeptics must often face the fact that they are ready victims of new superstitions.

The one thing that intellectuals should face is their own doubts. Doubters often assume that when they doubt they are somehow pure and untainted by any beliefs that have no foundation, a belief which almost amounts to a superstition in itself. For the lives of extreme doubters often take either one of two turns. Either they become fanatics of some political persuasion, a secular variety of the "true believer" or they permit a personal turn and become seekers for unseen forces to give them fortune and success, which is magic. This tribe is on the increase and in both versions.

The answer to the superstitious is now, as always, a proper balance of reason and faith, of dependence and trust, of effort and relaxation.

Faith without skepticism is superstition. But skepticism without a balanced faith is the seed bed of new superstitions.

ON HAVING ARGUMENTS

One day while riding back to Cambridge from Boston on the subway I noted a sign in the car which read: "Every argument means that somebody does not have the facts."

The statement implies that a fact is solid, unchanging like granite along the Atlantic coast (which, incidentally, changes a lot); whereas we know that a fact is as slippery as a Maine seal and depends on the agreement of men who tell us what a fact is. Facts do not run up to us and say, "I am a fact." A fact is what men agree is a fact and there is a long history of how facts have changed. Examples are everywhere, but think of the flatness or roundness of the planet earth. Think of planes being able to fly or not.

The implication is that since we disagree, there is some fact ready and available that will settle all arguments. Often this is not the case. It is rather the other way around. We must arrive at what is a fact by what Socrates called "the healing hand of argument," which means seeking, discussing, experimenting. It may be that we can agree on what we can never know; or we can agree on the limits of human discourse. The argument was not futile though no facts were found. Rather we have come to a disposition about life, of learning how to live when we do not have the facts. This whole attitude is itself a fact of life so important that we may say truthfully a man has not learned the art of living until he realizes it.

In every realm of human living we are in the business of revising facts because they do not contain the full knowledge as we now grasp it.

If this position is true -- and there seems reasonable probability that it is -- then the worst tragedy of the mind would be to have no arguments because men had the facts. And if such a position is relevant in the basic sciences, imagine what openness is needed when we come to the spirit of man. In this realm of discourse Nietzsche is right that convictions may be more dangerous foes of truth than lies.

Where is a fact when it is quite customary, as Huxley once indicated, for new truths to begin as heresies and end as superstitions? Somewhere between a heresy and a superstition there is good ground for the healing hand of argument.

And it just may be that the greatest fact a man can find is a little bit of wisdom to live with life's ambiguities.

VIRTUES AND VICES

Thoreau cautioned us that if one advances in what he calls virtue he had better look to his vices. A man, for example, addressed Jesus once as "good master" and the immediate response was, "Why callest thou me good?" indicating that even he felt he was not good. The great ones of the religious traditions know that evil and good proceed apace in life. As one develops the other one comes alive. There does not seem to be a stable position, either privately or in groups, where one may rest content that he is now a good person. The man who assumes that he is good is already on the way to a kind of inner rot. He has ceased to be sensitive to the corrosions and contradictions of life.

Two types of persons portray these problems. First is the one who feels pretty good about some achievement. His "virtue" makes him feel happy. But immediately his sense of balance operates to warn him that in so many other areas his life need to be examined. He knows that he cannot rest content with his success. The truly religious person is open to a realm of possibility that has not been achieved in his goodness.

The other type of person upon achieving some moral virtue immediately identifies it, you might say, with the kingdom of God upon the earth. He draws a circle of contentment around himself and feels satisfied that he has arrived. He seems to be unaware of what Thoreau points out, that as we are rapid in our virtue, our vice keeps up.

Let, then, no man rest content that he has arrived at some state of virtue. Achievement in one area, we need to be warned, is perhaps neglect in another. And the church itself is relevant here. It is not a club for saints as someone has said, but a hospital for sinners. The church is not a place where we come to be good and hide our weaknesses and our failings, A church is the place, of all places, where we should be free to face our failings, to acknowledge our imperfections. I think a minister would rather serve those who fail here and there and acknowledge their failures than try to help those who refuse to confess their own weaknesses.

Some people's virtues open their eyes to their lacks. Other people's virtues blind them to any limitations. The same religious insight makes some men proud and others humble. It is interesting to watch men with honor, position, or power thrust on them, to see how some grow under it and others just swell. The Lord have mercy on a man who has "virtue" but no character to sustain it, for there is nothing unholier than the so-called good man who is proud of his goodness. If all a man has is his conscious goodness then he is limited indeed. He may be blind as well.

No doubt this double-edged nature of virtue prompted Thoreau's comment that if he repented anything, it was his good behavior -- which is to say, a goodness limited, narrow, and blind to any evil. He said he would run if a man came to do him good. He was afraid of those people who have no sensitivity to their own evils. Such people are to be seen everywhere -- the

one-cause people, whose single plan will save the world. On the right and on the left we find the world filled with them. The trouble with them is they seem to have no sense of the contraries of life, of the predicaments of human living, the contradictions and the evils that are all mixed up with what we call our good. Wrote Thoreau on that same day in 1841, "Every time we teach our virtue a new boldness we teach our vice a new cunning. We are double-edged blades and every time we whet our virtue the return stroke strops our vice."

A NOTE ON GOOD AND EVIL

St Paul asked, "Shall I do evil that good may come?" and the question has haunted the ages. He answered himself with a resounding "No!" But in this age of psychology how often we know that the important thing is to keep vision alive, the mind alert, the conscience awake, the spirit striving. And sometimes as a matter of record this has been done through "evil."

That wise, insightful Shakespeare who preceded Freud by three hundred years saw deep into human nature. "Some rise by sin," he wrote, "and some by virtue fall." There is a two-edged sword for you.

"Some rise by sin" is not to be taken as a cue to go out and commit sin so that you may rise. It is much more biblical than that; the woman in the garden, according to the story, was commanded by God not to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden. But even so the record reads: "...she took of the fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate." That is the record. But the passage goes on: "Then the eyes of both were opened....." Their eyes were opened after they had "fallen," after they had "sinned," if you will. Their fall was a rise, for it led to human independence and the spirit of creativity.

The varied story of rising by sin is a fascinating one.. There is a place in life where sin gets defined too narrowly, where men and women accept the sanctions of society too literally, and the spirit of man is hemmed in by narrow bounds that restrict

his humanity. By all the codes of society, to break out of the prescriptions is a sin. Yet the very life of the spirit of man may depend on his breaking out of bonds. Had there been no sin in the garden of Eden there would have been no man with freedom. "Some rise by sin."

But the other part is also to be acknowledged: "Some by virtue fall." That seems like a shocker on the face of it. Can a man fall by virtue? Listen to the words of Jesus speaking of the prostitutes of his time: "These go into the kingdom of God before you." The record is filled with moral people who were not good, of good people who were not nice, of pious people who were not humane. What is the brake for a moral man, convinced that he has a revelation of the whole truth and nothing but the truth, who is ready to convert the world to it? There is no brake on this man, and his "morality" blinds him to his corruption. Truly troublesome in life are the people who are virtuous but unkind, and moral but authoritarian. There is a natural route from such morality to authoritarianism.

Of course one feels absolutely that what he thinks is the truth and nothing but the truth. But still one may be mistaken. That little bit of reason and judgment needs to be heeded in the midst of absolutely pure motives and moral perfections.

Not to heed this inner voice is to fall by virtue. The world houses many people who are going straight to hell on accepted paths of virtue. And what are these virtues? They are not virtues really; but straight-laced social customs tangential to the issues; good emotions long ago stopped at a point which

happens not to be the real point now; gripes that look like virtues until one examines them to note their burnt-out convictions and lack of compassion.

If there is anything certain in this life it is that one never knows what may come of his sins and his virtues. There is no final stability about the reference of these terms, unless a man refers to the spirit of insight and growth that comes of compassion and mercy and love. When one truly lives by the spirit he need not worry about the rules of the book. "Love God and do what you like," wrote Augustine. That man is virtuous who lives not by a rule but by a vision, who loses himself in service and concern.

THE MORAL AND THE ETHICAL

Moralities sooner or later disappear but a living ethic never. Morality, from the root mores, means the custom or style of life at a given time; but ethics from the Greek ethikos, means character. The two words are often confused and used interchangeably. Let us try to distinguish them.

One is moral when he accepts the condition of life and does not blame others; one is ethical when he tries to make life more meaningful for all men.

One is moral when he has a gentle spirit and is kindly and compassionate; one is ethical when he relates this compassion to power so as to make a more humane society.

One is moral when he tries to do what is right; one is ethical when he ties this attempt to understanding, to make an order of his morality as a guide to follow.

One is moral when he has mercy for the weak; one is ethical when he tries to create a more decent and compassionate society to lessen afflictions.

One is moral when he has good intentions and does all his acts from a good motive; one is ethical when one links the right motive to the right act so as to make a consistent pattern of social order.

One is moral when he makes peace with his neighbors and lives a good life; one is ethical when he lifts his own peace-making to the level of law and order and justice and fairness.

One is moral when he does not kill; one is ethical when he projects a society where killing is less necessary and peace more possible.

One is moral when he keeps the Commandments and follows the customs of the day; one is ethical when he adds to such behavior the understanding that a broken commandment may not mean a broken life -- that no morality can carry all the weight of the good, the true and the beautiful.

One is moral as he fits in with his times; one is ethical as he points to a new day when a higher morality may be ours to claim.

It is entirely possible that one may be moral without being ethical, and one may be ethical and reject some of the current morality. Thus we enter into the clash of conscience over human wisdom and folly.

There is always a part of us that rejects another part of us; and there seems to be something in us that is calling to a higher realm of behavior than we have yet attained.

Morality is for the time, for the nation, but ethics is for all time and for all nations. Morality will pass away but ethics will never pass away.

CORRUPTION AND MORAL GROWTH

Life permits no achievement of virtue which is safe from possible corruption. Nor does religion give us a state of grace which is secure from decay. Religious people sometimes assume that religion makes them good, or that religion puts them on a higher moral plane than the best of the secularists. This assumption is often not well-founded. The danger of being religious is the danger of being too familiar with great moral demands, so intimate that we think we have arrived in fact. Religious literature is replete with stories of people who were convinced that they were righteous when in fact they lacked human understanding.

The danger of all virtue is that good things have a point of passion or of stagnation where they pass over into their opposite. "Virtues are more dangerous than vices," wrote Ludovic Halvey, "because their excesses are not controlled by conscience." Exactly! The number of ways in which excesses may impress themselves upon pious people is legion. The burnings at the stake were all done by virtuous people; the persecutions, the holy wars, the moral cleanings-up, the often encountered attitude that we know what is best for other people -- all these and hundreds more -- are ways in which virtues become vices.

Specifically, the danger is that there is no moral brake for these holy virtues, no conscience to call a halt to passion for a good cause until it becomes an outrage. Where was the moral check for the Communist hunters in the United States -- even to the point of calling General George Marshall the number one Communist? Where is the check on the Communists in Russia who scourge the land to find defectors from the faith?

We can overcome the danger of ingrown virtues when we remember that none of us has arrived. Is this not the message of high religion -- that before God we have a long way to go? There is no religious vantage point where one may sit down content that he is now a saint. There are two classes of people, some wit has observed: the righteous who think themselves sinners and the sinners who think themselves righteous.

The man who begins to assume that he is good is on the moral skids. The next stage of his life follows in due course. He begins to persecute, in words, in actions, those who are not like himself. He becomes intolerant, bigoted, and a reformer in the worst sense of that word. There is danger that a religious person out of assumed righteous motives may be led by the route of religion to become in fact irreligious. How inescapable is the judgment of Karl Marx as stated by John MacMurray: "The beginning of all criticism is the criticism of religion."

THE IMPULSE TO DO GOOD

I have often been troubled by a contradiction in what great men advise. One piece of advice is about doing good. William James advised us to seize on every impulse to do good and enhance it by not letting much time elapse before we moved the impulse into an act. He wrote: "No matter how full a reservoir of maxims one may possess, and no matter how good one's sentiments may be, if one has not taken advantage of every concrete opportunity to act, one's character may remain entirely unaffected for the better. With mere good intentions hell is proverbially paved."

But listen to a much older piece of advice from Cicero who said this: "It is the part of a wise man to restrain, as he would a chariot, the first impulse of good will." What does Cicero mean here? Surely he is seeking to remove from himself the superficial impulses to doing good that turn men away in suspicion and disgust. He seeks to escape the goodness that engulfs and takes over a person. He rejects the goodness that binds oneself to oneself in the very act of doing good, like the man who let the head of the camel into his tent and ended with the animal ousting him from his tent. No doubt it is the kind of goodness that Thoreau was fearful of when he said he would run from the first man who came to do him good.

How then do we reconcile these seemingly contradictory pieces of advice? One is talking about the depth of commitment and the other is talking about the superficiality of intention. James says that if we are to build our character we must act and

not permit exceptions to the act. By repetition of the act we strengthen emotions that we wish to enhance. He is not talking of the quality of the emotion but the fact of it. He is giving advice on how to build character without regard to good or evil results. When we keep acting on our impulses we deepen them and sustain them. This seems to be a well-established procedure in psychology.

But Cicero is talking about the quality of this impulse to good will. Is the impulse to good will really good? Is it good for me to have it and is it good for him toward whom I feel it? What will be the outcome of it?

To submit the impulse to be good to such scrutiny may seem unkind or irreligious, but it is the very mark of intelligence and moral growth. The Scripture says of Jesus, "He went about doing good," but such goodness is more than an emotion; it consists of acts of mercy and compassion.

It is the impulse that must be scrutinized. What is the object of this emotion? After the first impulse there may be a second and a third and a hundred. One who keeps up his emotional drive after scrutiny is the intelligent and committed man. If he is not able to look at his emotions we have a candidate for becoming a fanatic and crackpot. Let us have intelligent examination of our moral intentions and our impulses. That is, let us take time to consider what it is that we are doing, what it is that we are intending. Take that first impulse to do good and look at it, and if it can bear scrutiny then act on it until it is deep in the emotional pattern of life.

All first impulses need to be examined. An unexamined impulse is no better than an unexamined life. In fact the examined life begins right there.

ON MAKING MISTAKES

Will Rogers used to say, "If you don't learn anything from your mistakes there is no sense in making them." We make them, none the less. And there seems to be no easy way to overcome our mistakes. To err is human and a persistent mark of man. But the attitude toward our mistakes is what we can control. We can overcome the notion that we are perfect, that we never make mistakes, that we are somehow an exception.

There is a Scripture that sometimes leads people astray. Jesus said to his followers, "Be ye perfect as your father in heaven is perfect." Some people take this as a command that they somehow convince themselves they are following. They become convinced that they are perfect. The ideal for man to be like God is not a command for immediate attainment but a judgment against our egotism. It is a reminder that we all fail; that no one should be proud until he is like God!

We make mistakes because we are human, fallible, ignorant of some things we should know but do not. We make mistakes because we tried the right thing in the wrong manner, or the wrong thing in the first place. We make mistakes because we did not see the way to act or what to do next, or what others would do, or because we blindly followed what others did.

To make mistakes and to accept this fact, and yet not to abuse the privilege, is to bring one's ideals out of the clouds and to be saved from the illusions of perfection. Said Confucius: "Do not be ashamed of mistakes."

The great use of perfection is not to kid ourselves that we have it, but to remind ourselves that we do not. Realistic is the human estimation of ourselves that sees we must live in this world and not in castles in the air.

It is a fact of life that every profession claps blinkers on those who profess it. So a mistake made in the line of one's professional bias may be forgivable, or understandable, but it is a blindness nonetheless. It would be helpful if every person in a profession could remember that he might be mistaken. He may not see the whole truth, or he may see the truth from a certain slant, or the slant from a narrow perspective, or the perspective from some special interest. And so on we may go until we may see that humility and tentativeness should be the mark of those people who assume that they know. Chesterton wrote of those people who know "the last word about everything and the first word about nothing." Between the last word and the first word there needs to be a middle word about attitudes toward life and people. How easy it is to draw a mathematically precise line from an unwarranted assumption to a foregone conclusion. And yet how irrelevant it may be!

We live all the while in the midst of illusions, the flatness of the earth, the rising and setting of the sun, the hardness of material things, the flight of time, the perception of space. As long as we remember that they are illusions, we are in the realm of sanity and reality. We live all the while also in the realm of personal illusions, that because we think so and so it is the truth, that the way we did something is

the right way to do it! We may think that the essence of the matter is just as it has always been, that our tradition and our past are superior to all others. Now in these matters if one does not have the gift of understanding and a sense of humor, he lives at best in the realm of fantasy, and at the worst of madness. The ideals our forefathers crusaded for become the defenses their descendants would rather die than move from. Our illusions become the dead ends that close reality to us.

Each person fills the temple of truth with his favorite illusions. And the worst illusion is that somehow our broken pieces on the altar are the whole truth of man.

"Everyone makes mistakes," wrote Alice Tilton.
"That's why pencils have erasers."

DEFINING BY LABELS

A label, says my dictionary, is a convenient, generalized classification. A label must be convenient, for so many people use this method to think. If they can pin a label on a person or a movement, that will settle the matter for them.

The most typical labels in our time have been "communist," "liberal," "hippie," "conservative," "pagan."

To define by labels is to pin some classification on a person, and then exclude him from all other classifications or variations or modifications of that label. For example, it is to forget the qualifying phrase "so far as I know," which includes a number of limitations that should be remembered. It means that if one knew more he might see things differently; and if one is open to more information, that should be remembered and included in the label.

Then one should remember that a part of this classification should be "up to a point."

And then if one adds the important qualification "to me," he places another element of openness to this classification. The world looks in such-and-such a manner "to me," and that little two-word qualification makes a large difference in defining a person's stance. How different it is to say, "This is the way it is!" and the other way of saying, "This is the way it is -- to me." If one were labeling a person and forgot to mention this qualification, he would do an injury to the person.

But if one goes ahead and says, "This is the way it is

to me on Easter Sunday 1974," he adds an important qualification of time. Times makes a great difference when we define a person or a movement.

But one might go ahead and make a further qualification. "This is the way it seemed to me on Easter Sunday 1974 when I lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts." The place where a thing happens often makes a difference.

Finally, however, it is important to know just what it is that is being said. For we live in a world where few things are alike; least of all, persons. How silly to label a creature as variable and complex as man and think we have him in our net.

ON NEEDING THE OPPOSITION WE REJECT

We should always consider carefully thoughts we have which contradict our emotions. And not to be forgotten are those ideas that we say we disbelieve, and how important they are to sustain the things we do believe. Whatever in the world would most people do without ideas that they reject? They become persons only in terms of what they are against.

How often it is with many people that their stern denunciation of things, their unbelief in things is founded upon a blind belief in other things. A fanatical devotion to what is called virtue often makes genuine goodness impossible. Furthermore, the comprehension of the moral community calls for higher achievement than the denunciation of other's errors and corruptions. To satisfy our need to denounce is not enough to gain the goals we have set our hearts on.

Life is styled for many people by the evil that they oppose. Life is shaped for them by what they do not wish to be. While this appears to be a fact of life, what is darker in hue is the other fact that many people's virtues feed on the vices around them. They need the evil to define their good.

The man who fights what he calls the rotten condition of things needs that rottenness to give his cause luster; the righteous man who thunders from some Mount Olympus about immorality adds to his zest; the smut fighter who slithers around the newsstands gloats over that smut and feeds his illness on it. It has often been revealed that anti-pornographic crusaders have an inordinate love of pornography.

What would the Democrats and the Republicans do without each other to dump all the evils on? Each side looks for some crack in the solid armor of opposing political machines and when they find it, as they always do, they gloat over it. They seem to need the oppositions' evils to define their cause.

There is hardly a righteous cause in the world that does not feed on the evil that inspired it. While no one becomes a saint through other's sins, many of us never seem to realize this. One must judge men not by their opposition to evil, but by how much they seem to need it and even at times to love it. What would the fundamentalists do without hell?

Eventually we must come to a maturity that does not separate the world into black and white, good and bad, one part against another part. We must try to find that which is common to both of them. This may mean that we must stop talking about morality and start talking about specific evils and goods.

Is there a good word for Judas? Is there a case for smut? Is the righteous person out to purify the whole world so different from the rest of us?

It is community we need and not enemies. And as members of the community we may realize that in our good there is much evil. (And there I go using terms that are not specific.)

So long as we try to be members not of the community but of our own selected aspects of it, we may cut away and damn and declaim -- the parties, the state, whatever -- and never stop long enough to see what it is we are feeding on.

There is much with this world that needs to be improved. The problem is how to state it, how to do it. The world is often unwise and unjust but too often it makes up for this lack of humanity by being damnably self-righteous.

PSEUDO-SCIENCE AND PSEUDO-RELIGION

"Someone is gibbering away on his knees, talking to someone who is not there." Those were words from R. D. Laing, a British psychiatrist, author of the books, The Politics of Experience and The Divided Self. He goes on about man praying, "If one does not accord him the social intelligibility of his behavior, he can only be seen as mad. Out of social context his behavior can only be the outcome of an unintelligible psychological and/or physical process for which he requires treatment."

Now this is one view of prayer by a psychiatrist: That it is a form of madness out of context and the only reason we don't treat such people or lock them up is that so many people do the same thing. But let us look at this a moment. "Treatment by whom?" we might ask, for while one may know about psychiatry, this does not indicate a necessary knowledge of what prayer is.

In the first place, why on your knees? Did we ever hear of praying while walking? Or sitting? Or taking a hike through a deep forest or beside a stream or in a canoe along the shore?

Let us talk about that "someone who is not there," as he put it. Just how did he find out that someone is not there? Has he proof of this? And are we ready to deal clearly with the Scripture "the fool has said...there is no God?" Is it possible that the assumption that there is no one there is itself a kind of madness that needs treatment by some enlightened clergyman? For have we considered that "the someone there" is not an essential condition of prayer? What is there, is a reality, as

the Psalmist put it, that tells of the glory of God. But if you feel that is begging the question, then what we confront is a condition of life itself.

Prayer is not talking to someone who is not there; prayer is a humble acknowledgement of our dependence on forces that created us and that sustain us.

Prayer is not gibbering away on our knees, as he says, to some power outside us, but a resolution of the powers within us, the eternal manifest through us.

Prayer is not some escape from thought and reason, but thought risen to the height of purpose and dedication to the great propositions before men.

Prayer is not unscientific babbling in defiance of logic and laws of contradiction, but the focus of human purpose on a problem that demands excellence and action.

Prayer is not really talking to anybody but listening to the universe and the heart that responds. The talking is to ourselves, so that we can think together and feel together about this wonder and amazement that surprises us with life.

It is one of the oldest tricks of human thought and one of the neatest, to try to explain a thing by explaining it away. Psychological subterfuge is no substitute for philosophical or theological thought.

I leave with you the wisdom of James A Froude: "The superstition of science scoffs at the superstition of faith." Yes, and sometimes genuine faith scoffs at the superstition of pseudo-science.

ON BEING OUT OF FAVOR

Symphony Number Two by Jean Sibelius is a splendid work of art. It was written in 1901 and had its premiere performance in March 1902. It won acclaim all over the music world. The notes by James Lyons said that Olin Downes -- "the most powerful music critic in the world" -- hailed the work and held high that view for a long while. Likewise the great Serge Koussevitzky of the Boston Symphony Orchestra gave the work a high place on his performance schedule. Sibelius' Second seemed secure.

But then something happened that changed things almost over a music weekend. Another music critic, Virgil Thompson, wrote a biting criticism of the piece in a New York paper. He called the Second Symphony "self-indulgent, provincial beyond all description" and somehow those words seem to sink into the minds of both listeners and the performers. Almost at once Sibelius' Second went into disfavor.

This sudden reversal may tell less about Sibelius than about the importance of bold critics and the instability of the listening public. But it reveals also how all our favors and disfavours depend on what people think and feel at a particular time.

Only in our day is Sibelius coming back into favor. He is being played and heard again. And while he is not on so lofty a pedestal as he was in the twenties he is regarded highly. There seems to be a solid musical quality to him that will last.

But whether this work will remain as steady as one by Mozart or Bach or Hayden or Beethoven will depend on the acceptance of music lovers and, not to be overlooked, of course, the music critics who themselves have notes to toot. Music critics sometimes give the impression that they know far more than the great artists. We might say of them what William Shenstone said about literary critics: "Every good poet holds a critic but the reverse will not hold." Robert Burns called critics "cut-throat bandits in the paths of fame."

They have a point, nevertheless. Truth, after all, in any communications medium, is what men say it is. Critics have a large say in that discussion. Beauty is what people declare it to be, through what they like, what they approve, what they will buy to read or purchase tickets to hear.

"A thing of beauty," wrote Keats, "is a joy forever." And so it is! But what is not forever is what we consider to be beauty. In that estimation we are as unstable as the moods of men. For many a thing once thought to be beautiful has long since come to be thought of as queer or quaint or not thought of at all.

SPIRITUAL PRESENCE

Here is a statement worth reading over and over: "For all that may be known of God by men lies plain before their eyes; indeed God himself has disclosed it to them. His invisible attributes, that is to say his everlasting power and deity, have been visible, ever since the world began, to the eye of reason, in the things he has made."

The place to begin the search for spiritual reality is right before our eyes. Men are very wont to declare a proposition to us as the substance of faith, to be assented to by the mind. When such propositions are bolstered by tradition and authority they are called orthodox. It might just be that these venerable doctrines are stumbling blocks to the modern mind, hindrances to genuine spiritual presence.

In any case, we must always return to where this whole business started. Where did it start? Right before our eyes, in the things we can taste and touch and feel and smell and see. Let us at least begin here; with the earth if you will, with the ground on which we stand, sky overhead, the rain in our faces, and the song of the wind in trees. Begin where the soil produces the fruit on our tables, food for our freezers. Do not suppose a case, as Thoreau would warn us, but take the case that is, this holy earth that birthed us and will receive us again at death. Begin with this secular earth!

Men must always return to this element. St. Paul has the audacity to tell us that this is "all that may be known of God by men...in the things he has made." If this is a revelation,

then it stands behind all particular revelations that men declare.

It is, if you will, an orthodoxy rooted in biblical concepts that enables us to stand in judgment on all the so-called orthodoxies, which in reality are abstractions from what is real and necessary. In this biblical idea we can accept the spiritual presence, the God of earth and air and fire and water, this mysterious and wonderful fountain of our being and light of our day.

And yet we need particularity; that is, we need something definite to believe. We need also points of commitment, causes to live for. We need moments to make up the hours. But finally like the moments that are swallowed up in the everlasting, so the particularities -- the creeds and doctrines -- are changed by time and place for new statements of the revelation.

Wrote Max Picard: "Spring does not come from Winter; it comes from the silence from which Winter came and Summer and Autumn." Here we stand in spiritual presence, that place of ultimate concern which is at once holy and radical. "There is no sense in looking behind phenomena," wrote Goethe, "they are theory."

THE DIVINE IS IN THE HUMAN

A great Scripture goes, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." That is a straightening thought; that inasmuch as we serve what is human we serve what is divine. And right it is!

For it is the human element in religion that causes us to take a lasting interest in it. If we examined carefully the world view of some great theological leaders at most ages in the past we should probably reject them. But man's humanity in whatever age we gladly accept.

That is the trouble and glory of theology. There has always been the theological system that speaks of the abstract elements in some system. Either God is the "unmoved mover" with Aristotle or God is the absolute this or that or the other. Often it is a matter of proofs and arguments and all that which we find in philosophical theology. One would not say that it is unimportant, but that it is not central. What has been central all down the generations has been love and tolerance and justice and peace and fair play.

We tolerate all manner of failures in the science and philosophy of the great thinkers of all the ages so long as they were compassionate and understanding. Consider Shakespeare for example. If we were to be strict about his metaphysics we would toss him out as many people do religion for the same reason. Shakespeare believed in the Ptolemaic system of astronomy with its compact flat universe. He believed in witchcraft and most

likely believed in ghosts. His world was filled with demons and the incredible superstitions of his day.

So why not toss him out? He is unscientific. He is out of date. The answer is that we keep him because he is so incredibly human and revealing. He understood human nature. He knew what was in man. One finds in him the sins and failures and humors of mankind. One finds in him the aspirations and idealism and strivings of the best in man. Our loves, our hopes, our griefs and our limitations are in him. He understood the human mood and he pictured us as we really are.

The thing that lives in literature is what is human. It is this same force that keeps religion alive. Theologies and theogonies may come and go, world views may change with the centuries, our outlook on mechanics may shift with the new world views of science. But if we correctly grasp the human heart and emotions we may find that they live with all generations. For man does not change all that amount in his basic hungers of the soul. His mind changes; his ideas shift and he gets a new science and a new government. He finds a new philosophy of politics. But the human heart still needs love and the human spirit still has the same basic wants as ever.

Great religion and great literature will always live, for they both speak of the human heart.

For experience increases our learning and knowledge, but follies of men seem to be the same as ever, always in need of understanding and compassion. When we express compassion we express the heart of religion. It is the most human and blessed thing we can do. For what is human lives and will never pass away.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HUMAN EQUALITY?

We are always talking in this country about the equality of men. What does this statement mean? What did Jefferson mean when he said, "The foundation on which all our constitutions are built is the natural equality of man..."

What do we mean when we say in our Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal"?

The feeling and idea of equality are deeply imbedded in our culture. What can we mean by them?

We know that on the face of it, much in our experience contradicts the belief. We know in the first place that we are not equal in ability. Some are morons and some are geniuses.

Secondly we are not equal in the stations in life to which we come by accident of birth, inheritance, or geography. Some are fortunate to be born in surroundings that give them every encouragement; others are not so fortunate. Some are born to political freedom, and others are born to political suppression.

And in the third place we are not equal in the constitutions we inherit — physical strength and nervous energy. Some are born to illness; some are born to handicap; some fall into accident early in life and must struggle to cope with heavy odds. Some are born with a weak constitution and nervous system.

How unequal indeed do men seem in this world! No wonder Thomas H. Huxley could say, of equality, that it was a "baseless fiction."

Yet there is something in this dream Jefferson talked of, that we all think and talk about; that makes us still say with Lincoln, our country is dedicated to the proposition that men are created equal.

Equality concerns the fact that there is a realm at the center of a man's soul which makes him the center of the universe. The world, to paraphrase Schopenhauer, is man's idea. Life is his life and death is his death. The idea of human equality comes naturally to man. He is something more than a political animal or a social animal; he is something more than a brain and a body in time and space. The fact is the world is experienced by him in such a way that he is the center of it. True, he thinks of many things beyond his own range of senses, and knows about things and places that he will never see, and feels influences that come from afar. Still these are his thoughts and feelings. Whatever others may think of him, here and now, for better or for worse, the world stops and starts with his own awareness. It is a triumph or tragedy, a dream or a reality, sorrow or joy, according to his feelings. It is a riddle or an intellectual order according to his thoughts.

This then is the source of equality: To each one of us the most certain thing in the universe is that we are the center of it. Religiously, this means that we are souls before God. We are unique in this respect. It is in our uniqueness that we are equal; it is in our station as souls before God that we are equal. In this respect the greatest and lowest, the mightiest are equal in the same way. This is the source of the doctrine of equality. We must never lose it.

THAT OTHER PART OF OURSELVES

Men appear to be single-minded at times, dedicated to a particular cause, sold on some way of life, "true believers" they have been called. Yet there is another side to most men -- the side of them that we often do not realize is there -- the doubleness in their single-mindedness, the uncertainty in their strong affirmations, the secret doubt in their public declamations. Said Montaigne: "There is as much difference between us and ourselves as between us and others."

Only time is required to see how the many aspects of men's affirmations change. It used to be one of my pastimes to observe clergymen who were in the process of change; observing how the radical theists were moving toward humanism, and how the humanists were becoming theists. Most men are double in these respects, so that in their most firm beliefs there is a secret disbelief; some of them preach community and it is the last thing in the world they can accomplish; some men declaim against this vice or that bad fault; and these failings cling to them like vines on a Harvard building. "We are," said Montaigne elsewhere, "double in ourselves, so that what we believe we disbelieve, and we cannot rid ourselves of what we condemn."

Luther, so firmly rooted in the church tradition, had his secret doubts about many things and he became the founder of Protestantism. St Paul, raised in the Jewish tradition and a most zealous defender of the faith, persecuting men even to death in that defence, changed his mind and became the founder of the Christian faith. Various Protestant leaders -- Joseph

Priestley, also the discoverer of oxygen; William Ellery Channing, organizer of the American Unitarian Association; Ralph Waldo Emerson, radical dissenter from many accepted opinions -- all these men and many more were rooted and grounded in Protestant Christianity, and yet each of them moved to new forms of it.

So it has been in political motivation. Arthur Koestler tells of his movement from belief that the communist movements had the answer to life's questions to his disbelief and despair with that outlook. When we become too bleak in outlook about the communist world we need to remember that all the while changes are taking place in its most strict adherents. Who knows where the next heresy will break? Or when?

Nothing is more difficult to grasp than the motives that move us to action. Men seek God out of fear or insecurity. Men turn to the church because they fear death, or cannot believe in themselves. The reasons for doing any number of things are fraught with psychological undertones.

Failings are perpetuated in our lives by a host of sufficient causes, none of which may be good. Men who reach out to save the world may only be saying to us that they are trying to save themselves. A woman called out to me one day in Harvard Square, did I want to attend a meeting to unite the world? I hastily ducked this noble opportunity but thought to myself, "Great Heavens! What a gigantic long reach. Why not try to unite Cambridge? Or why not try to unite herself?"

Reformers pride themselves on the possession of some eternal truth. How humbling it is to realize that we may only be

saying that we are not yet able to face the truth about ourselves. Who can tell how much of our zeal roots in some limitation in ourselves? Or maybe we take that tiny glimpse of the "eternal" truth in ourselves and extrapolate it all over the place until we lose sight of our original insight. By too grand causes men often lose sight of and become indifferent to everyday causes. We are always in the process of doing unto others precisely what we have not done unto ourselves.

ON STANDING FOR SOMETHING

There are those who are so certain that they and they alone are right in whatever they conceive or do, that living with them is a continual strain. We have to make allowances; we have to say the right things; we must not be at ease or relaxed and let slip one idle word for we will be called to account.

This sort of zeal, or to call it by its proper name, blind passion, enlists the strongest prejudices of the human mind and when falsely directed, or more likely undirected, the worst passions of our nature. Terrible are the extremes to which some people can excite themselves when they conceive that they, and they alone, are right.

How can we determine if we are the kind of person who in many realms has all things unsoundly settled? One test is our ability to keep calm when the things we detest most are discussed; another is our ability to be "hot under the collar" and yet cool in judgment. When we blow up we have ceased to think and have begun to throw our weight around. A reasonable man tries to persuade by reasoned discussion. He conciliates and he is tolerant. We can live with such a man, even if we have a different viewpoint from him.

There is another type at the opposite extreme. He never stands for anything. You can not for the life of you get him to have a firm conviction. He is a bit like the man that A. J. Balfour mentioned who really believed that two and two make four but felt that a gentleman would not press the point. His

food and drink, his pleasures and his daily round, are all that he cares about. This sort of person is a problem for he can never be enlisted in any great enterprise. He is a genuine member of the uncommitted generation, and Jesus had some hard things to say about him.

What is the happy medium for us to strike? Surely we need convictions and yet we need to live in peace with our neighbors. We need to realize that of course we have the truth, but it is the truth as we see it. For of a truth we are bearers of what is eternally right, but we need to remember that we may be mistaken. Of course we may cut to the quick, trim away error, and stand for principle. Yet we must remember that it is the line as we have learned it, and what we call error, others call truth, and what is principle is not settled by fiat.

Can man learn to be firm and yet pliable? Can we have convictions and yet be democratic? And if things don't go our way, can we learn to be patient? "Blessed are the peace makers," said Jesus, "for they shall be called sons of God."

THE PRESENT TENSE

"Set up a strong present tense," wrote Emerson, "against all the rumors of wrath, past or to come." A strong present tense -- a strong faith in what we are, what we do, what we think, and what we may become. Whatever else a strong present tense is, it is at least this -- a life commanded from within, a self contained in its thoughts, a human life lived to the full. It is not living as if one lived only in the past, nor is it totally enveloped in what might some day be. A strong present tense is enjoyment of life now, faith at this moment a grasp of things at this critical juncture of insight. It is also the realization that the past is gone and the future no one knows. What we have is the present.

This is the day of the Lord
Rejoice and be glad in it.

We may approach this wisdom by design or by instinct. One winter day I watched a child rolling and romping in the snow. How lovely a sight it was! It was the sheer enjoyment of life -- of "this" moment -- so carefree and light, unreckoning of the fates of human existence. But on the same day I saw an old man as he slowly and gracefully shoveled the new fallen snow, an old man full of years and wisdom, self-contained in his philosophy, having come to terms with things as they are, accepting life by design as the child did by instinct.

Birth and death are the two ends of the stick of life. Beyond each end lie eternities. We have the length of life -- whatever it be -- this is the interval between the eternities in

which we may acquit ourselves. We need a strong present tense to live it gracefully, knowing full well that a vital present tense can best be lived by a working philosophy. Shakespeare said, "Time must have a stop." Every question of time poses a problem of eternity. But no resolutions to the problems of eternity are possible without dealing with the matter of time.

ON QUESTIONING WHAT WE DO AS A NATION

Sometimes the spirit of people runs wild in pessimism, defeat and nihilism. Sometimes just the opposite happens. It runs wild in abandon to some cause. This latter attitude was stated by Stephen Crane in one of his poems:

I saw a man pursuing the horizon:
Round and round they sped.
I was disturbed at this:
I accosted the man.
"It is futile," I said,
"You can never....."

"You lie," he cried
And ran on.

The proper kind of questioning does reveal the things we might best not try to do.

It is often hard to know which is the most difficult to deal with: the over-optimistic people who do not question what their goals are, or the over-pessimistic people who have given up on any goals.

We do know with President Woodrow Wilson that "A nation will not be redeemed until it is redeemed spiritually."

How are we redeemed spiritually? Surely one thing we must do is to question our acts, goals and manner of living. Archibald MacLeish raised this question in a statement in 1960 and it may be repeated for consideration: "That something has gone wrong in America most of us know. The trouble seems to be that we don't feel right about ourselves or with the country."

We feel that we've lost our way in the woods, that we don't know where we are going -- if anywhere."

Maybe what we have lost is old-fashioned character and stability. At least that is what Robert Frost thought before he died. In this poem about America he said this:

"Something we were withholding which made us weak
Until we found out that it was ourselves."

We withhold ourselves when we cease pursuing the vital questions of our meaning as a nation and begin thinking only of some horizon of power or money and place which tends to trip us up in corruptions of all kinds.

Peter Drucker in Landmarks of Tomorrow tells the story of a people who lost the ability to question their nation's goals. It is about a Nazi take-over of the universities in Germany.

"...this university was taken over by a newly appointed Nazi commissar. This man made the most outrageous illiterate speech, insulting systematically every senior member of the faculty and sneering openly at learning, intellectual honesty and all the things that the university stood for. Yet when he asked for questions, one full professor after another got up and asked, 'Will we get a bigger law library? Will we get more assistants?' When they were assured that there would be plenty of money for anyone willing to cooperate they all sat down smugly content."

The trouble with those professors was that they did not have enough serious questions. The quality of a nation is determined by the values that a people will not see trampled without question.

THE HUNGER FOR MAGIC

During World War II there was the popular saying that there were no atheists in foxholes. This simply meant that when one got to the extremities of life, as in some battlefield foxhole, and at any moment a shell might fall on you and exterminate you, or an enemy might come over the ridge and kill you -- in these conditions one tended to turn to prayer, to some attitude that recognized the powerless limits of life. The tendency was not to be an atheist. After all, what would be lost by being a believer?

The foxholes of World War II are now changed into a whole world of uncertainties. So many people today do not know what to make of life. Decisions are hard to make because the old values seem to be in question and new ones have not been established. There are many people, young and old, who feel that there is little meaning to life and they would as soon chuck it. The old values of religion seem to have disappeared for many and they have not found genuine peace in a religious vacuum.

It is this condition and much more that we confront in our time. It is the spiritual equivalent of the foxhole. From these people who have lost their old religious faith has come a new crop of modern believers who have attained a new faith in magicians. Robert E. Neale, the poet, in one of his poems puts it this way: "The foxholes of life are filled by magicians." We could put it another way: The foxholes of life are filled by believers in magicians. They want someone to tell them how to keep pulling the doves out of the coatsleeves as the magicians do on the Johnny Carson Show. These people want real tricks

performed to solve their personal problems. They do not have enough faith to believe in God; they do not follow any of the great prophets of the world religions; they do not have insight to explore the meanings of the great writings of Scripture. And they realize that they are caught in a life predicament: They are uncertain, worried, lost, wandering, rootless, spiritually homeless, restless and want help. So they do what such unbelievers have done in every age in the past -- they turn to magicians. It is always the ages of lost faith in the traditional religions that turn to the perennial faith in the performance of magicians. It is so now.

There are always plenty of magicians who tell us they can forecast our future. People may be worried, perplexed, fearful, but the magicians are not. And while God may be distant to you the stars are not, these magicians tell you. Your security is in the stars, not in yourself.

Because people are caught in their life predicaments they fall for this stuff, not realizing that their hopes will be let down; they will not find what they are looking for; and they will not get the help they think they will.

Even so the foxholes of life will continue to produce lively crops of believers in magicians. Not able to live in genuine questions they will fall for magical answers and the false resolutions to vital problems. The modern magicians are the witch doctors for intellectuals, who still in the technological age are able to cause people to believe in something that is mostly phony.

The difference between a genuine fictive depiction of reality and a phoney magical solution to predicaments is that in a genuine fictive depiction the myth orients us to face responsibly our predicaments; and in the phoney magical responses the solution is to get some inside track into reality or to try to manage the universe for personal ends. A genuine myth calls for a human response to adapt to reality; phoney magical solutions calls for reality to adapt to one's personal needs. A genuine myth orients the mind to further questions; a phoney magical solution by-passes human thought to complete mental capitulation.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH

Who is able to speak the truth? Truth is something that we reach for, in a community sense, in a common quest, and agreed-on results. Truth is very hard to achieve, and one should be as cautious about saying he has it as he is about saying the word God. These great words, God and truth, should be used only in the holy temple of the most sacred things, and only in the presence of the most trusted seers in the community. Even then one might be mistaken.

Attitudes differ about such great matters. Hear the book of Proverbs speak:

"He who speaks the truth
gives honest evidence,
but a false witness utters deceit,
There is one whose rash words
are like sword thrusts
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
Truthful lips endure forever,
but a lying tongue is but for a moment.
Deceit is in the heart
of those who devise evil,
but those who plan good have joy."

Speaking the truth begins in an honest attitude, a mind that does not deceive, but is ready to be honest.

This is the first major characteristic about people who speak truth -- they are honest about evidence and information that is available. They will give evidence without unduly weighting it and distorting it. They will not be deceitful.

Another mark of people who speak truth is that they do not color the evidence to hide its weaknesses. Joseph Fort Newton once said of a certain man, "This man was so busy defending his orthodoxy that he had no time to seek the truth."

Some people are like that. The truth is another obstruction to their system. They dislike any disturbance to their system in which they have things neatly worked out.

But truth is something else again. In the first place it is a group recognition even though it may be individually projected and presented. It is confirmed by the learned community in that specialty. The final test is always the group test -- do the scholars in that specialty agree that truth has been attained? And no matter what the great innovations might have been, if the scholars do not agree, you have not yet established truth in the public domain. But there is no other place where it is established. That is what truth is, an innovation established in the public domain.

But though truth has been established, agreed upon, it is not thereby above further criticism and debate and growth. Truth is subject to continued growth, continued fulfillment.

An important element in this discussion is that truth is related to an attitude. We must be flexible about what we believe, open to possibility in our specialty, ready to learn where we can.

It is just here that we often come upon the real stumbling blocks to knowledge. We have ulterior ends in mind; we have something that we must defend, we are true believers in this

or that. The fact seems to be that desire engenders belief, and belief and truth are hard to distinguish at times.

So long as we must defend some orthodoxy we are not ready to speak the truth. It is a rare thing to find a person who sincerely seeks truth, who is not so hooked into some system and grinds away at it, that he can take time to hear what is being said. System grinders gradually become incapable of noticing truth should they come onto it. They lose the capacity to see or hear or listen and anything new is a threat to their doctrines, and their very sincerity and blindness turns into a kind of deceit against the furtherance of life. Such people can no longer ask questions, much less live in them, but can live only in some system of answers.

THE QUESTIONING ATTITUDE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are defended when people listen to one another, hear what is being said, and attend to the points made. Had the King of England listened at the critical time two hundred years ago our disruption with England might never have occurred. But the authorities seldom listen when they have power and military legions to enforce it.

Human rights are defended by people who are not too sure that they are right, as Judge Learned Hand once said; who are ready to state how they see things, but are ready also to hear what others say.

Human rights are defended when we move from absolute personal convictions to more communal, relative, agreed-upon, worked-out public stands. Such compromises are less than the almighty truth but a working truth and in that spirit liberty and human rights can live and grow. For in this confusing world with so many angles to so many things, the believer in human rights knows that there is more than one way to be right.

Human rights are defended when we do not fly at one another with slogans and give up our ability to reason; when we still say with Thomas Jefferson, "The way to answer a bad argument is to give a good one." For in the concept of human rights, ideas are important, but they have an end in view which is the person and not the ideas themselves.

Human rights are defended when we do not assume that we must convert the whole community, but that we need only hear

what is being said; when we tolerate differences, and defend the right of people to be different -- at the same time refusing permission to extremists to dominate us and to destroy the community of understanding.

Human rights are defended when we accept responsibility to do our part in defending them; when we realize that apart from living people who defend ideas, they have no defense; that apart from people who support ideas and defend them, ideas have no life of their own; that human rights live in a community of people accepting and using and living their rights.

Human rights are defended when we refuse to let the anarchy of the world dominate our minds; when we refuse to let the passionate intensity of the extremists and the smug difference of the complacent, separate us from the real contest in the world.

Human rights are defended when we begin with the concept that they are inalienable but we live with questions on every matter of substance, at every turn in the human path where power or orthodoxy or invested interests tend to corrupt the concept.

Human rights are defended when we realize that truth has come out of our ignorance; light has come in our darkness; democracy out of tyranny because men and women believed in their rights, and made sincere efforts to think clearly and act honestly and to live courageously, and never to give up.

THE CEREMONY OF INTELLECTUAL BALANCE

The one who lives in the questions supports some causes and opposes others, but he is under no illusion that the kingdom of God is just around the corner. When authoritarians come along -- from the right or the left -- he will oppose them. For even when they are right they are wrong. To be right and fair does not mean that man must submit or crawl. The one who lives in the questions protests people who have life sewed up in a doctrine, who have prepared the answers before they have heard the argument; whose script is written before they have discussed.

Theologically and politically there are many today who do not discuss; they declaim. The one who lives in the questions still believes in the intellectual ceremonies of life. He does not want the world to come to what Yeats described in his Second Coming:

"Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity."

The one who lives in the questions shares the outlook of Martin Buber that God is in the meeting place of human minds when we confess our ignorance and look for understanding. We are molding and shaping a future as we work out our resolutions to predicaments. We share our doubts and find faith; we realize our ignorance and come to truth; we confess our sins and find community; we acknowledge our fate and discover freedom; we admit our wrong-headedness and find right living; we shed our

tears and discover laughter; we look fairly at our world and find home; we live in the questions and discover new possibilities.

Justice Holmes once said, "It is only by effort that we achieve the inevitable."

ON HAVING YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE

"Do your own deed," wrote Montaigne, "and know yourself." That is a double piece of advice that is hard to fulfill. How can we know ourselves and do our own deed in this day of multiple impressions from TV, radio, movies, magazines and the wealth of information from all the media. It is quite easy to understand that some people in our time find it difficult to have their own experience.

But we need to keep asking questions about what is happening to us. Somewhere in the wealth of information overload of our day we must keep asking, "Who am I?" and "What do I want?" and "How can I assert my own self-identity?"

Somewhere in the experience of our own hearts and minds we may find our identity. In seeking what we want from life, we must probe with the questions that lead to our own values and decisions. Beyond the input from the media we must question what is happening to our minds and souls.

As we keep asking the questions about what kind of a person we are, we need seriously to probe for the knowledge of ourselves. "Know thyself," said Thales a long while ago and it is a big order. But there is no order more important for us to learn. It is only by keeping the questions alive in our minds that we shall ever live at first-hand. To the extent that we become aware do we live in rich meanings.

For it is at this level that we are tempted to live at second-hand. We are very busy. We read a lot, but sometimes that reading may not be of the kind that will probe the heart

and mind. Emerson once said, "If I read as much as others I would be as dumb as they are." Reading needs also to have a question at the heart of it, to probe our lethargy, dig deeper into our values, reach for higher meanings.

We are bombarded with so much of packaged life today that there is hardly a way to get beyond it except by living in the questions. To live in the questions is what keeps us facing our reality, to reach beyond the immediate environment, to focus on ideas being born in our minds, to follow up on hunches we have to test them, to check on our prejudices that ordinarily we let slip by without question, to keep arriving at some new evaluation of ourselves and to know that there is no place in life where we can stop growing and remain alive.

In the end to have our own experience is what it is to become a person viable and alive. And if we have a good feeling about what we think that may be no text of its truth, but it will be a starting place to think about life. As Seneca wrote, "What you think of yourself is more important than what others think of you."

But what we think of ourselves is no final test of the validity of our experience. We test ourselves in the communal arena, in the give and take of life. But it is a great day in any one's life when there are solid beliefs about oneself that one may live with and start from. For it is a starting place to think from, to question about, and becomes the bridge to a growing self-awareness and experience. For until a person knows who he is he will never know who anybody is. In this sense the

kingdom of heaven truly is within us. And it becomes richer and more meaningful as it is more genuine and humane and fair and compassionate and honest.

REALISTIC FICTIONS

Wallace Stevens the poet has a great poem called "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction." It is a good poem and it speaks to our time of falling away from theological reality. For in this poetic medium which is the door to some lives, though they doubt the old beliefs about God, we can realize that we must still live by some fictions. Properly speaking, these fictions are what we have called myths and they are outlooks and metaphors of life.

We must live by some great fiction, that is for the older way of putting it, by some myth. A myth is a story, not literally true, but still true to life, that integrates a culture and a person, that gives life order and meaning.

We cannot easily give up a myth that gave life and order and stability and think we are done with it. People who have no myth, no great fiction if you will, as Stevens puts it, lose their bearings. We have moved from primitive religion that sees the world all as one, to historic Christianity that sees the world as dualistic, to the modern world where once again we are back to the necessity (due to science) to see the world as one. But we have a new outlook, a new science and a new technology and new outlook and sense of power.

We are somewhat lost, many are, because they do not have a supreme fiction that orders their lives. It used to be that theologians talked of belief in God, a god beyond the earth. That is probably not the way we should talk about God today.

Today we might talk of the human side of our relationship to the transcendent. It has no name perhaps, but is a reality that we sense and must ever anew take account of. It is the nameless reality, the condition of our lives. It is the supreme fiction but in that fiction we may find the truth of our lives.

This condition of our lives is not tied down in a belief. Wallace Stevens says, "We believe without belief, beyond belief." This phrase is a modern response to the condition of agnosticism. We are agnostic about the belief, and so ours is a belief in the conditions that enable us to produce beliefs, but is itself beyond belief.

That is, there are no categories that can sustain a creed today that is based on the old dualistic response of Christianity. An honest theology today is almost inescapably agnostic. Thus the term "god" serves as the name for the trustworthy affirmation of the world. If God serves as the name for this function, man may know a function but not the definition of the name. We can be agnostic about the definition but realists about the function of the reality.

We must keep living in the questions because beyond the fictions there are other fictions. And beyond the myths there are other myths. And there were myths before the myths began.

But somewhere, somewhere, we need to tie into life by a question that leads to a myth, that becomes the fiction that we live by. As tenuous as this may sound, it is the substance by which we can live growing and maturing lives.

THE ATTITUDE OF FINDING OUT

Living with questions and openness is part of the approach to change in ourselves. If we could rid ourselves of the notion that life is basically changed by external means, by what we have or own, and move toward the notion that people are changed by the attitudes they take, we would be on the right track.

I heard the story of a mother who was vigorously rubbing some beauty cream on her face. Her five-year-old daughter asked her what she was doing.

"Putting on beauty cream," the mother said. The child watched her in silence until she had finished and then the child said, "It didn't work, did it?"

Not to belittle the aids people may use to improve their appearances, the real beauty is in the spirit, in attitude, the life of the soul.

One remains beautiful by being interested in life, by contributing to life, and by opposing the rotten things around that will destroy a better life.

One of the basic ingredients of a good life is the attitude of finding out about things, and of keeping a picture in mind of what we want life to be like. This point was made by William James: "Human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind." That is about as vivid as one can make it. But it was said a long while ago by St Paul in these words: "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." The

New English Bible puts this same text this way: "Let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed." Remake our minds? Yes, we can remake our mental output by changing our attitudes.

If our religious faith inspires us to keep seeking, searching, keeping open, then things may happen to our spirits that are rather happily surprising. If we can avoid the pitfalls of settling in too quickly with some absolute doctrine, or falling too easily for some sour pessimism, but keep alive the spirit of the quest, then things can happen to us that will be truly exciting. We will be carried forward on the wings of hope and insight.

The attitude of finding out is rather basic in life. As a man thinks in his heart and mind, so will he be, it is written, and it seems to be the fact of life. People are weakened by two sorts of experiences, success and failure, and beyond both of them we must keep the attitude of finding out, as Kipling said,

"If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat these two imposters just the same"

Most of life is an imposition, good or bad, and the proper handling of it is in the attitude. On the walls of Chester Cathedral in England is a prayer in which the following couplet is to be found:

"Give me a mind that is not bored
That does not whimper, whine or sigh"

If we can see that life is related to striving, to growing, and that there is no place to stop; if we can see that this life of

growth is a responsibility of our own; and if we can see that this responsibility is related to our attitudes, then we can keep growing and learning all our lives.

WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE WITH QUESTIONS

To live with questions is simply to try to be as reasonable as one can. This in no sense means that one will always succeed in that attempt. But it means that there is no good alternative. These might be some of the steps in the attempt to keep the questioning attitude.

For one thing, a person tries to be fair and honest with what are called the facts, realizing of course that a fact is what men say it is. This means that one tries to state fairly what the situation is. It means that one will try not to make up his mind apart from the facts, apart from the situation.

Next, a person will ask what the facts mean. One will get at this question by looking at the issue: What speaks for my own personal way of seeing this problem? What speaks against my way of stating the issue? A good way of approaching any issue fairly is to try to see all sides which means the ones that disagree with one's own personal view.

Then as one looks over what has been said, with others contributing to one's objectivity on the matter, one may go further and project alternatives in handling the situation. What options are open for me? What is it possible to do? And then one can think out the paths that are possible. Again you analyze these options, these paths. What is for them and what is against them?

This leads to the next step which is to state what alternative is most plausible for you. If one is ready to make that decision, one may proceed to act on it.

Now these four steps seem to me to be reasonable, one could say that they are as nearly scientific as one may get on a social issue. The only reason it is harder to work in social issues and relationships is because of the variability of the subject matter, and the contrariness of humans.

Choosing is not some easy and light thing to do. It is the most difficult operation of the human mind. It is far easier to fall for some doctrine or institution or dogma or commitment that settles all life issues, which is the mood of our day. It is a big self-deception that by deciding not to be free one has the illusion that he has made a free choice. It is a bit like making one grand decision not to make decisions any more. That seems to liberate some people and gives them a glow on their faces like that on the faces of true believers.

One must have an emotional mood to accept the steps of choosing. The emotional mood is to accept the fact that we cannot make absolutely right choices, for life is ambiguous and uncertain. Life is incomplete and knowledge is partial and we know in part.

But then beyond that to know we must keep on trying to learn and grow, keep on seeking the path of truth, keep on trying for our potential in life. There is no final way to escape choice and remain a person of growth and possibility. It is hard to make choices and to know that we will have to make them all over again. It is hard to know that things that become settled will be unsettled again. It is hard to know that we must live all our lives by decisions. It is hard but that is the path to life more abundant.

Shelley concludes Prometheus Unbound with these words:

"To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite;
 To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
 To defy power which seems omnipotent;
 To love, and bear; to hope till hope creates
 From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
 Neither to change nor falter, nor repent;
 This like thy glory, Titan, is to be
 Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
 This is alone life, joy, empire and victory."

III

LIVING WITH OPENNESS

THE POSSIBILITY OF CHOICE

I shall light a candle of understanding in thine heart, which shall not be put out.

In the creation story in Genesis the serpent speaks to Eve and tells her of the great opportunities before her if she will only choose. It is interesting that this opportunity to be a more mature person is offered by the tempter. It reveals that at the heart of our religious culture is the view if we choose, if we ask too many questions, we are making a life mistake. The tempter says in the story, "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened." It is not the fruit that opens her eyes, nor in a modern context, the drugs, but the choice.

This story portrays choice as a falling away from the right path.

"In Adam's Fall
We sinned all."

Somehow the picture presented is the reverse of what actually happens in life. We don't begin with maturity and lose it; we don't begin with righteousness and ruin it; we begin as struggling humans seeking some insight and some goodness and often we fail at it. We do not begin with freedom and muff it; we are fortunate if we may find a bit of personal freedom before we die. We do not as Eric Fromm says in a title to one of his books, "escape from freedom" for we did not have freedom in the first place. Nor is it as Rousseau writes that "Man was born free and everywhere is in chains." The truth is nearer to the view that man is born in emotional and mental chains and gradually matures to be somewhat free.

Nor is it the fact that we are born with a self and lost it. We are struggling all our lives to be a self worth living with. We become a self worth living with when we can make mature choices. The freedom and maturity is in the choosing. For it is one of the central marks of a maturing person that he make more discerning choices.

We find two responses to this predicament of growing up. One response is to give up, to see so much of the evil of life that people come to nihilism and despair. On every hand the crime and atrocities, the wars and destruction of values of life, have enabled many to infer, fallaciously, I think, that therefore it makes no difference what happens, so they give up.

On the other hand there are many people who respond to this climate of fear and evil with a total commitment to some system of belief. They become the new true believers of our time. These people see life in sharp dichotomies. They do not ask any more what life means; they tell you. They do not ask any more questions; they declaim. They do not ask to find out; they already know. And if you will give them a few moments they will tell you all about it. With no doubts.

So the possibility of choice becomes narrower for many. They fly to the extremes. And somewhere in the middle there must be people who keep asking questions in the firm belief that life is never all black or white; it is mostly shades of grey.

Life is never all right or wrong; it is mostly a mixed bag.

Life is not all good or bad; it is a cross between them.

Life is always filled with predicaments that require resolution; always filled with ambiguities that need to be lived with.

The point is that if we are to live a good life there is no escape from accepting the ambiguities of life and to do the best we can with them. This means the questioning attitude and the ability to live with less than a final answer.

General George C. Marshall had a favorite saying that he used when he confronted a situation demanding decision. "Gentlemen," he said, "don't fight the question. Decide it."

THE DOUBLENESS IN MAN

Montaigne, that wise Frenchman, expressed this thought: "We are, I know not how, double in ourselves, so that what we believe, we disbelieve, and cannot rid ourselves of what we condemn."

Have you ever felt this way, and cried out like St Paul, "Who will deliver me?"

We see this fact about us causing some strange human responses. We see, for example, that when humans lack something, they do not accept this fact but go into some sort of extravagance to cover it. The man who does not know where he is going may go very fast and he may cry out with the wit: "Hurry, I have lost my way." The man who cannot reach some goal redoubles his efforts. These contraries work much woe and confusion in the human heart.

Again, we are often busy about many little things when we do not know the one thing that we should be doing. We often go in circles like the dog who has lost the trail of the rabbit.

For another thing, there is the man who has put everything into seeking things for his life. But in his inner heart he often wonders if he has not missed something. He is trying to satisfy a deep need that cannot be satisfied by the things he seeks. Who has not experienced that woe?

Greed is a sort of misplaced drive, and in this extreme of self-seeking there is a self-rejection.

The lack of contentment of many in our society is nothing but an attempt to live in their doubleness -- their faith

is really doubt. Their hunger of the spirit is really a materialism; their hurry is really a basic confusion; their dogmatic certainty betrays the uncertainty of their inner life; their self-righteousness is a clear indication of their moral turpitude; their over-zealous patriotic attitude has a ring of disbelief and fear in it.

The Scripture says, "a doubled-minded man is unstable in all his way." Often so many who cannot make up their minds and know who they are have a furious pugnacity.

All of which says that there live in the human spirit contraries and doubleness. And it is a wise person who knows how to try to live, but not to try too hard;

-- how to live but at a reasonable and proper pace;

-- how to be forceful and get things done but how to relax from the hurried race;

-- how to love things but also how to curb the Mammon in the heart.

There is a certain art, as Jesus indicated, to losing your life, which means to relax it, to accept it, to pace it, to love it.

THE CENTER IS NOT WEAKNESS

Radical responders to problems often think that people are weak who stand for some position in the center. The radicals contend that people in the center vacillate, are not forward enough, and when it comes right down to the issues they cannot make up their minds.

So, some radical people contend. But the answer is that the man in the center has made up his mind. He has made up his mind to listen to people on all sides; and he has made up his mind that no one extreme has a monopoly on truth; he has made up his mind that when you run to one extreme you abdicate from the full awareness of the other points of view; he has made up his mind that the center can be as definite as the extremes.

In historical perspective now we can look at extremes in the Civil War and realize this point. The extremists were those who supported John Brown a century ago, including Emerson, Parker, Higginson, and others, and their successors take over buildings and burn and loot in the name of their extreme position. John Brown overthrew a garrison of troops at Harper's Ferry to liberate the South from slavery and became thus one of the precipitating occasions of the Civil War.

But not only John Brown but Emerson and Parker and others like them, really rejected the union of these states except on their own terms. They came at union from an extreme point of view. They thought only of liberty and not of union. It was men such as Lincoln and Daniel Webster who stood for union

and pleaded for it, and lost many friends over it. There are times when it is hard to know where the center is. A radical may think he is standing square in the middle of the truth and justice, but his myopic views do not see the far ranges of discontent and contrary points of view. He cannot understand why the world does not immediately support his every statement.

But the center is that balance of views and persuasions that will keep a group working on the issues and seeking truth and seeking justice and trying to make democracy work. Agreeing with that procedure Lincoln supported the union, though he rejected slavery. So often radicals must be disagreed with, not because they are wrong in their goals, but because they use the wrong methods.

The image we keep in mind is one that Yeats invented;

"Turning and turning
in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear
the falconer,
Things fall apart,
the center cannot hold."

Lincoln had in mind a center that could hold the nation together.

We need a centrist view today. The center is not weakness but the strength of all our virtues, enough strength to incorporate and overcome our weaknesses.

Radicals always have a point, but in part they are wrong. They are wrong because they do not understand the center. They call the center weakness and fail to see that it is combined strength; they call the center blindness and fail to see

WHEN DOES THE CENTER HOLD?

that it is a vision of the whole; they call the center a mere compromise with the truth and fail to see that in matters of sincere opinion able men differ and that compromise has the virtue of enabling men to live together in peace. It has been said that the radical is what goes to the root, and it is true; but it also is the very reason that so often men forget the branches without which there can be no fruit. They say that if you are in the center you will not speak to the real issues; but they forget that the big issue is that the center is the only place outside violence where you can face genuine disagreement.

With many radicals blind belief in one thing is founded upon unbelief in the democratic process. They are so sure they are right that they cannot help but be wrong.

Yeats in his great poem "The Second Coming" writes these words:

"Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity."

This picture is not a happy one. People are at the poles of conviction where some believe too little and others believe too much. Some have no convictions at all and others seem to have nothing but passionate states of mind.

You see them all the time, people who are ready to declare to you the almighty truth not as they in humility might put it, but rather in dogmatic certainty as it is in reality and in fact! At the opposite extreme are those who could not care less; they have no real conviction, no genuine beliefs.

When such a situation obtains where some have no convictions and others have too many, then the center cannot hold. But a question we might ask is this: "When does the center hold? What do we have to do to cause the center to hold?"

The center holds when we keep before ourselves the whole people, those who agree with us and those who do not agree with us, and all those who are not committed to our way of doing things. The center is that link between the people that must be forged if we are to be a nation with unity and freedom.

The center holds when we keep before ourselves the goals we have in mind that preserve the most good for the most people.

The center holds when we are not torn by factions or lose all contact with other opinions; when we do not become so convinced that we are right and all others are wrong, and cloud things over with arguments and opinions that begin with the assumption that they are, of course, obvious. For nothing is obvious to those who do not see these things as obvious.

The center holds when sincere and honest people on different sides of an issue can meet and be friends and realize that they differ and wonder why it is that they see so differently. When men can honestly disagree they may some day possibly agree. Where they disagree honestly they may preserve that sanity, that humaneness, that reasonableness which is the beginning of the beloved community.

The center holds when we use reason and not declamation when we use persuasion and not violence; when we keep before ourselves the great tradition of brotherhood and community, the marks of which are compassion, justice, democracy, fairness, kindness, tolerance, mercy and love. These are not easy to define or to attain, but they are the spiritual content of the good life at the center.

Some of us might believe a little more and others a little less. And all of us might need to examine ourselves lest in cocky assurance or spiritual neglect we have contributed to the decline of the center. For as Yeats said, when "the centre does not hold," then "things fall apart."

THE MOOD OF DEFEAT

One of the most depressing aspects of modern life is the number of people who feel that life is about done for, that there is no hope and that all we have left to do is to give up.

One way of giving up is just to say there is nothing to our life and make no effort to do anything for the country or oneself. Some say that everything is corrupt -- the church, business, the government -- so what can one do? It is best to do nothing, some say. For if you help the Establishment you only contribute to the corruption.

Now this talk may sound like idealism. Actually it is defeatism; for it gives up hope for the country even before anything at all is done. It is capitulation to whatever is.

You may see some of these pessimistic people at the simplest level with their special clothes. They are saying in their way: we opt out; we don't believe in the Establishment.

Some others may take a seemingly more dedicated way to deal with the situation. They concentrate on their speciality. It may be their business. They work like troopers in their own narrow corner of the world and complain loudly of the remainder of the world. It may be any one of the professions that has a built-in method of dodging the troubles of the nation.

At the worst level men turn against one another and against established ways of life. Crime becomes a way of saying one wishes to get his own way, and the nation can look out for itself. Such types are on the increase. The rise in crime of

late is to be noted in most major cities. Some leading citizens accept bribes and fail their public trust.

But nations live because there are men and women and children who have ideals and who try to live up to them. They are ready to try to put into practice their written ideals.

It is important that this nation remember it cannot live on past words, but only on present deeds. Nations grow stale and inflexible and become too formalized. They lose the spirit of understanding and may cease to be humble and ready to face the new realities. How well Rudyard Kipling put this thought in his great prayer:

"God of our fathers, known of old
Lord of our far-flung battle line,
Beneath whose awful hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine,
Lord God of Hosts be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget."

And too we might pray for those who have given up and bowed out of the real human drama and struggle. A nation will never go to seed unless people go to seed. A nation will never falter and fail if the people keep it facing its real task. This means that we not be like the drifting sand of the desert blown by the winds, but like oases where the plants may grow and life may be sustained.

Lichtenberg once wrote, "One must judge men, not by their opinions, but by what their opinions have made of them."

WHAT MAN MAY BECOME

The story of man's origin on this planet stirs the imagination about what man may become. John Pfeiffer estimates that man in the earliest form appeared some twenty-five million years ago, but that modern man has appeared only in the last forty thousand years. (Homo Erectus appeared about 750,000 years ago and Homo Sapiens appeared 250,000 years ago. Neanderthal man appeared 75,000 years ago.)

The story of man is a long and progressive one. The age spans tend to increase. Out of a past filled with fear and struggle, of war with hunger and wild animals he had to manage a means to survive. The author says:

"Hominids or members of the family of man have spent about twenty-five million years in foraging on savannas and only a few thousand years living in cities. Man has been a wild animal for twenty-five million years and a domesticated animal for less than one-fortieth of one percent of that span. In a basic sense, far from having arrived, he is just beginning to find his way, his place in the scheme of things."

He believes that man is not yet fully human. The reason for this is that some of his old ways from the wilderness and the long past still dominate him. The male aggressiveness still corrodes much of human life. Why does man waste his resources in foolish wars and kill off his fellows and use every technique that his intelligence can devise to kill his own kind? The fact that man acts this way -- killing about thirty million people in World Wars I and II alone -- indicates that he

is not yet fully human. Man has this contradiction about himself; in his aggression he is very like the early man on this planet, yet in his love of peace he is unlike them. He is a creature on his way to some new creation, some new reality but he has not yet fully arrived.

The author believes "cultural evolution has come to dominate genetic evolution." If that is so, then with the modern world of computers and machines that can extend the mind of man, perhaps there is a new possibility that man's further evolution may lead to a new kind of man. He closes his book with these words:

"Most of prehistory has been a record of small bands on the loose, the efforts of a minority species to survive in an alien and mysterious world. Most of history has been a record of a painful but steadily increasing inclusiveness, of letting more and more people into the club of first-class citizens -- commoners as well as kings, non-whites as well as whites, women and children, all minorities and pseudominorities..."

"Human evolution proceeds as it has during times past, in an atmosphere of uncertainty. Nothing in the record proves that man will become extinct, or that he will endure. Whatever our viewpoint, it is and will continue to be a matter of belief, an act of faith. We shall continue to behave as we are designed to behave, proceeding positively on the assumption that man represents not an ending but a beginning."

That is a great and hopeful note, but it requires action. If a man is to make a new beginning he must do things

that make ecological good sense in the long run -- minimizing pollution of the earth, ceasing his killing wars, cutting down on his population expansion so that he does not over-tax his resources and thus turn the whole of mankind into a fighting camp of strugglers for sustenance. If the cultural evolution has taken precedence over the genetic then the duty is ours. And St Paul urges us: "Put on the new man."

UNDERSTANDING LIFE BACKWARDS

Kierkegaard said somewhere that we must live life forward, but understand it backward. Did a plane crash in Boston because some birds were sucked into its jet-prop engines that snuffed them out? Did a plane crash on the flat lands of Indiana because its speed was too fast, causing undue strain on the structure of the wings? Did a train crash into the rear end of another because an electric switch had failed?

We might list many situations that man confronts where he has to live forward -- not knowing the dangers, not knowing the causes of the disaster he might confront, but still he had to live life forward.

Once he meets some accident or tragedy, then begins the process of trying to understand what happened. How often safety measures follow disaster. The plane that fell in Indiana was put together piece by piece and an hypothesis was formed. An engineer at Cornell told me that after the crash tests were made that revealed the weakness of the structure of the wing in relation to a vibration that might be set up at high speeds in a strong wind.

On a life-sized area of human fronts we must live forward. We do and dare. We must explore more than we understand. Only later will we understand more fully. We know more about World War I today than the people who lived through it. We are not limited to present sight or an imagined foresight, because we have hindsight. If history would only repeat itself -- which

is questionable -- we should be wiser than we are. We must garner wisdom from our forefathers but remember that insights into their times will not quite fit ours. Man's daring and courage create enough of a margin of difference that we learn no final lesson for all time. We should have supposed that dealing with Communism in Russia since 1917 would have taught us a lesson we could apply to Cuba, but we seem to find no lesson. We blunder forward and only later will we see the mistakes we have made in Cuba.

Man tends to live first and seeks to understand afterward. He is not primarily an understanding creature but one who wants to live. While in moments he wants to know, he wants much more to live -- to love, to eat, to make merry, to reproduce his kind, and plunge into the maelstrom of his existence. There are urges within him that are in some sense beyond his control. He must live first. Then by the mercy of a cool head and a bit of time he might try to understand. On that reflection and understanding depends all his culture and civilization.

THE TRUE AGE OF MAN

We have many ways to determine the age of a person; when we first go to school, when we are sent off to high school and then college. Sixteen is the age for the driver's license. Twenty-one is the age for drinking, and now changing to eighteen.

But all of these ages are arbitrary and miss the real age of development of a person. For many young people today go through their school years and never does a spark of creative insight come to them.

The true age of man is when he comes to himself, when some creative spark in his soul is fired into a flame.

When is this age? It comes at different times for people, and we should stop expecting to manufacture responses by the calendar. For some young men it used to be when they ran away from home. For others it was when they put out to sea from ports all along the eastern coast. For other it was when they had to take over the farm for ailing parents, or when they got a job and were on their own.

In times past we allowed time for the slow developer. Let us take Herman Melville for example, the author of Moby Dick, one of the truly great works of American literature. Melville dated his real development from his twenty-fifth year. Think of it! His twenty-fifth year. That is several years beyond the time the typical student graduates from college these days. "Until I was twenty-five," he wrote, "I had no development at all."

He was a slow developer. What room do we today make for the slow developer? Then there is the problem of the student

who is a grade master. He can whiz through all the courses, but never really develops. He becomes a kind of first-class grind, able with skill to dish out what gets him through, to master the techniques, but he never really finds himself, never starts developing from the inside.

There is no one way, of course, for a diverse society like ours, to train boys and girls into men and women. But what room today is there for the lone wolf, the slow developer? How would an Edison fit into our society today?

Something happened to Melville at that twenty-fifth year that one could wish would happen to every young man. Writes Melville of that crucial period in his life: "Three weeks have scarcely passed, at any time between then and now, that I have not unfolded within myself." What a thrill it is to unfold within oneself! What a thrill to arrive at that intuitive insight of one's life that sets one out on the path of discovery! For Melville the experience was his discharge from the man-of-war, the United States. It can be anything that tees off one's inner life to a new organization and sets one aflame with life.

One of the essential ingredients is time -- time to be alone, time to meditate, time to break into the monotonous line of this and that without direction or vital stimulation. Some men need more time. It is a frightful thought that today our social systems may not allow for the late bloomer, the Herman Melvilles of the future.

The thing one hopes for is that our stream-lined procedures will not utterly destroy the man that could come forth.

Was it not Bernard Shaw who said of Shakespeare, "Thank God, Oxford or Cambridge did not get hold of him and corrupt him for life." Can we allow today that there is some educating that only a man himself can do? There is education that one does not get in courses no matter how many he takes. The greatest education a man can get is to prepare himself for the time when the intuition of his life will come. It is a fact of our life that we can understand only what we possess. Thoreau said that education makes "a straight-cut ditch out of a free, meandering brook." But the vital education of a man may need the view of the sky from a new turn in the brook.

A man needs time and leisure, so that he may look at his choices from a new angle; and perhaps one day he may make a decision that will lead to the resolution of his life, that will henceforth direct his path unflinchingly.

Let a man remember this: he must be himself, for no one else can be. When a man learns that he has come of age, he can then assume responsibilities for others and for causes.

LIVING BEYOND THE QUESTION

Dylan Thomas, the Welch poet who so powerfully wrote great lines that have stirred so many, took a critical view of his poetry. In the introduction to his collected poems he has this word to say: "...if I went on revising everything that I now do not like in this book I should be so busy that I would have no time to try to write new poems."

That states the human predicament exactly. We all have made mistakes, have done things we are sorry about, are presently living a style of life that we may not be too happy about. But what shall we do about it? We could spend all our time looking back at our past mistakes and failures. We could spend so much of life doing penance that we should never get on with living today.

We may try to do something in the community and it is never as good as we should like to make it. Well, we can lament over and over about this until we are stalled for further action, or we can admit that life has its failures and get on with it. Everything that we do will be a partial failure.

One could go on with regrets until it would be futile, producing the kind of familiarity that one has with a repeated mistake bobbing up like a floating boat anchor. But there are seas to be sailed and things to do and one cannot get anywhere if he just sits in the boat.

We have to admit it -- anything that we do we shall be partially sorry about. Each man sees the weakness and faults of

his own situation. Some people envy the rich, but the rich man knows that his position is not above worries and regrets. Some people honor the man in the limelight and think it would be marvelous; but the man in the limelight longs for nothing so much as a bit of quiet and peace. The successful writer is envied by the ones who have never succeeded, but if we knew the hearts and souls of the successful we should understand the pains and heartaches that they have.

There is a special worry to every achievement and a secret trouble in every profession. There is no place or station in life that is beyond self-criticism. And when we know others we know that they have their share of heartaches, each in his own way, each in his own time.

But there is life to be lived, work to be done, and we have to live today. We could go on revising everything we do and think until our posture in life would be always backwards. Then we should not have time to write the poems of our lives today.

But if we go on we might sally forth to produce lines like these of Dylan Thomas:

Light breaks where no sun shines

and these great lines

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And these:

Though lovers be lost love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion.

These are great words; and it is our continuing happiness that he did not revise and revise until he killed them. At some point a man must publish, he must paint, he must work in the community, and he must settle for something less than the kingdom of God today.

DREAMS AND PROOF

Mark Twain said that the only things he could remember were the ones that never happened. This delightful banter gives an insight into the way many people probe the world -- by dreams and vision, imagination and feeling. They may be so taken with their "pictures" that they conclude these are the only reality.

But we know there is another order of reality -- that which is sustained by reason, by scientific judgment and proof. These two are not different worlds, but parts of a whole that belong together. "Let us learn to dream....Then, perhaps, we shall find the truth," said A. Kekule, and then added, "but let us beware of publishing our dreams before they have been put to the proof by the awaking understanding."

We are alive only to the extent that we have dreams and visions. Only then do the rusty doors open and the thing called truth appears as an insight. We shall not be able to nail down the truth until we cinch it with proof or catch it in an argument which informed specialist can accept. Sometimes we must move along on both fronts at once. "To be forced by desire," wrote I. A. Richards, "into any unwarrantable belief is a calamity."

Life is a long tussle between these approaches. It is difficult to know which is the worse to deal with: the so-called rationalist who knows nothing of visions or the so-called visionary who thinks his visions are self-warranting.

Yet life has both elements to give to us. It has ecstasy and delight and joy for the person who is not so bound

that he cannot experience it. It has the thrill of order and proof and reason for the person who can discipline himself for it. What a pity that so many people set these off one against the other. For life is of a piece -- it is whole -- and we need to realize that there are various handles by which we grasp it. It ill behooves us to berate any means by which the full kingdom of light and truth comes to man.

ORIGINAL RELATIONSHIPS

Walking across the Cambridge Common one evening, I felt the fresh winter air, and thrilled to the bright moonlight, and the stars. What a lovely evening it was. A thought ran across the barrier of my mind; how does my response differ from what men have experienced in ages past? Is my experience different? Unique?

Immediately the first answer is "No," for men and women have always experienced such lovely winter evenings, if they live in this exhilarating climate. Job speaks of "the moon walking in his brightness." And one can sense what Solomon meant when he speaks of the comparative, "fair as the moon."

So we know that what we feel and experience is as old as sensitive man.

And yet, to come further, something in each of us says when we have a vital experience, "This is my experience and not another's."

We who live in these areas of many cars and busses and highrise buildings and millions of people, we must try to cultivate our own experiences. Something in us cries out with Montaigne: "We must, we must try to cultivate our own authenticity."

Yet it is most difficult to tell what that is as we walk across the Cambridge Common. There is a word that might help us. It is "ineffable." For an experience to be ineffable means it cannot be put into words. We may experience all the seasons as did the ancients, but with our own stamp. "Why should

we not have a poetry and philosophy and religion be a revelation to us, and not to the history of theirs," he continues.

This is a good question and I find my first "no" turned to a strong affirmation. The universe is fresh every day to a person with his eyes and spirit tuned to it. Who would suppose that our partial traditions, our revelations of the past, our art or music or drama, our science or technics have tapped the full power of all that is? Are there not more things to see and know and become? We sing a great hymn the first line of which is: "Revelation is not sealed." Of course not! The sun shines today somewhere; the long moon beams shimmer over the restless waters on some coast. Life goes on and changes as it ever seems the same. There are new thoughts, new angles on old thoughts.

As we walk across the Cambridge Common, or down our street or road wherever we be, we can approach the day with a thought lifting us along. This is a day with opportunities for original relationships. No one has ever lived this moment before me. Who can tell what is in store for the human spirit awake to its opportunities?

The experience of our world may be ineffable indeed. We may not have words for all that we feel. But we can be richly endowed nevertheless. It is mostly an attitude that we need. Let us demand of ourselves a readiness of the spirit, a worship that is alive, a mind alert to the issue, a work that calls forth all that we have, and let us not forget the advice of the ancient Hebrew: "The word of God is a discernor of the

thoughts and intents of the heart." The real word waits to be heard. But it can only be heard by the one who is not disobedient to his own integrity, his own heart, and who will move beyond the face of the sky to the vision of his own spirit.

RELIGIOUS REALITY IS DEPENDABLE

Down through the centuries, through times of doubt and belief, times of changing circumstance, in war, in peace, in one kind of government or another, from times of little science to times of much science, from one generation to another, there has always been the same need for belief and faith, and through all the varied expressions of this need, the same reality on which we may depend. I would like to affirm that what we may depend upon is just as secure, just as real, just as abiding as at any time in history; and we have a part, a very human and important part, in creating this climate of faith.

Now some may have their doubts up. They might say to me, "Well, you know this is a time of very little faith as you can see in the falling-away from the temple and the church; a time of the rebellion of youth, of the falling-off of responses to religion."

To which one might answer, "This is only superficially so. In the first place, much religious expression is outside the church. Secondly, this is a time of as great a reality on which you may depend as at any time in history. This need not be a time when 'men,' as Shakespeare said, 'turn to airy nothings.'" For the reality we may depend upon is the same as it ever was; the security of the human is even more substantial than ever, and the satisfactions of faith are just as vital as ever.

But we may note this difference: We do live in a time when the kind of faith we subscribe to must fit a new world of

science and technology. We have had a knowledge explosion for the last one hundred years, involving some rather basic shake-ups in the conceptions of the emergence of man (Darwin); and in the psychology of man (Freud); and in what we may do with the earth's materials and the conception of our reality (physics). In one sense, it has been an age that has wiped out many illusions of the past about security and knowledge and certainty. Absolutisms of the theological sort have been exploded. But it has also been an age of dissolution -- two world wars and the Vietnam War, and the nuclear bomb and all the horrors that hang over our heads.

But as well as being an age of insecurity in religion or faith or of human values -- this age is the opportunity to create a new idea system, a new approach to what man has talked about all along. For what has changed is not God, or the reality on which we depend, but our concepts of these realities. It is here that the new concepts are central and where man is in control. He invents how he talks. The same resources are there to be had, but we need a way of conceiving them, new handles to grab them, in this age of possibility.

Consider for a brief moment the concept of God. "Don't talk to me of God," some modern man says, "for I don't believe in him."

But the trouble with that kind of talk is that it is existence-oriented. Think of God as did A. N. Whitehead: "God is that non-temporal actuality which has to be taken account of in every creative phase."

Here we are in a new creative phase of life -- science and space and biology and all the cross-cultural influences. The same reality is there, but we must take account of it in new ways.

TO BE RELIGIOUS IS

To be religious is to be sensitively aware that the mind of man can design and mould the materials of the earth to serve a spiritual purpose.

To be religious is to feel that the world is not only eternal but present, not only everlasting but open, not only fixed but malleable.

To be religious is to think thoughts that reach the great realities that probe the meaning of all we experience, that grasp what is helpful and clarifying and lead to a steadying trust in life.

To be religious is to realize that men are both good and evil and that life is not a trap but an opportunity to express dedication and concern.

To be religious is to find a fellowship of true communion where evils are faced and great joys celebrated.

To be religious is to cherish the liberties of the mind; and establishes as true progress that which enhances all men.

To be religious is to love the earth as our home and to cherish the air and waters and sky as the setting of the quality of our life.

To be religious is to realize that a wise ecology is even prior to a sound theology.

To be religious is to create a theology for our day and time, using every resource historical and timely, and every experience secular and sacred to interpret the whole man who faces a new age.

To be religious is to face every unbelief and ask what belief it implies and means and what it does for the life of man, what positive the negative points to.

To be religious is to be innovative, to establish sound values, to sustain man as he ventures in this technical age.

To be religious is to be concerned with the whole community, the human community, the natural community, the political community, the community of language and interpretation and understanding, the community of belief and action.

To be religious is to know that changes in the statements of belief are not the end of religion but could be a new beginning, on higher levels which declare from the ground of faith that

Wonders still the world shall witness
Never known by men of old

To be religious is to be proud but not arrogant, humble but not subservient, believing but not superstitious, committed but open.

THE THINGS THAT ENDURE

Faith Baldwin wrote, "Time is a dressmaker specializing in alterations." Yes, just about anything we do soon needs alteration. But what is it that we alter? What is it that stays? What is it that we can believe in?

We can believe in the common sense of the people. We elect men and they come and go, but the common people are still here. And we trust their instincts to correct their errors. Lincoln said as much when he remarked that God must have believed in the common people -- he created so many of them.

If the people are given time, they will face up to what it is that they want. They will put up with present evils rather than run to an unknown claim to goodness. Montaigne makes this point:

"...a person of great authority in the city of Capua, one day found means to lock up the senate in the palace, and calling the people together in the market place, told them that the day had come when with complete freedom they could take vengeance on the tyrants who had so long oppressed them, and whom he held alone and disarmed at his mercy. He advised them that these men should be brought out one by one, by lot, and that they should decide about each one individually, and have their sentence executed on the spot; with this provision also that at the same time they should decide to appoint some honorable man in the place of the condemned man, so that the office should not remain vacant. They had no sooner heard the name of one senator than there arose a cry of general dissatisfaction against him. 'I see very well,' he said, 'that we must dismiss this one; he is a wicked man; let us have a

good one in exchange.' There was a prompt silence, everyone being much at a loss whom to choose. The first bolder man to speak his choice met a still greater unanimity of voices to reject him, and a hundred imperfections and just causes for refusing him. These contradictory humors having grown heated, it fared still worse with the second senator, and the third; as much disagreement about election as dismissal. Having tired themselves out uselessly in this dispute, they began bit by bit, one here, one there, to steal away from the assembly, each bearing away this conclusion in his mind, that the oldest and bestknown evil is always more bearable than an evil that is new and untried."

This native wisdom of the people to know their limits is what we can trust. Given the framework of speaking and listening and not rioting, given the framework of protest but not destruction, given the framework of dissent and law within the context of disorder within order, we shall gradually work out our lives in peace and freedom.

And through all the things that change we know that the thinking mind, the believing heart, the questing spirit will endure, and in that viable human creativity we can put our trust.

ON BEING BY-PASSED

The little village at Palermo, Maine, which has an old-fashioned Maine country store, has disappeared from the main Route 3 from Belfast to Augusta. The village is by-passed by a new, modern highway. The old, twisty up-and-down road still goes to Palermo, but the through-traveler will go right by the village as if it never existed. If one wishes to go there he must determine to do so. My guess is that we will probably never go through Palermo again, en route to our cottage.

How often we see examples of such road-building today, and it reminds us that life can be like that for any one of us. Just when we think things are all set, someone changes the route, and we find that we are not all set at all.

This little Maine village is a parable of the modern world in many respects. Just when the church thought it had a perfect theology and an eternal, solid system of thought, the Reformation by-passed it. Just when men thought they had a secure system of astronomy, and all things on earth and in heaven were proper, Copernicus by-passed it. Just when mankind was resting secure in the biblical story of origins with its view on special creation, Darwin by-passed it. Just when mankind thought that the modern world had settled in the proper groove in economic thought, Marx by-passed it. Just when man thought that human psychology was understood in its entirety by biblical categories, Freud by-passed it.

And so it goes with us. Look how many times in the world -- in industry, social life, intellectual life, religious

life -- we thought things were all set and then someone or some event came along and by-passed them. The most pitiable fact about many people is that they are fighting battles for a position that has already been by-passed.

But I feel a counter thought coming on. Come to reflect on it, I like the little by-ways, or as someone has called them, "the super by-ways," those little roads that take us to the up-country back places. Perhaps we need them so we can regain our composure to go out and face the super highway. But the counter thought has its limitations. One cannot retreat to a little bit of belief in Ptolemy so that he can swallow Copernicus. Ideas have a force of their own and one cannot will to believe what he doubts in his mind. That is merely to wish the highways were not there, but the cars will go on just the same.

HOW DOES MAN SAVE HIMSELF?

Some people believe that man can never save himself, that he can only be saved by some power beyond himself. I contend that this is not so. It is like flying an airplane. Man cannot fly by flapping his arms, but he can fly by applying the laws of aerodynamics in a skillful manner to heavier than air craft. Then he may fly at great speeds even into the stratosphere.

Now man saves himself in a like manner. Sitting in one's chair one cannot say, "Now I will save myself." That becomes an impossible task. But still you can do things that will save yourself. You can rely on those forces -- psychological, social, spiritual -- that save you.

Here for example is a life situation which demanded the kind of response that produces salvation. In one of Maxwell Anderson's plays he depicts a group of men who have come to George Washington to tell him that they cannot go on. There was no food to eat, and the cause was hopeless, they said. George Washington replied with these words:

"What I fight for now is a dream, a mirage perhaps, a something that never was on this earth since men first worked it with their hands, something that never existed and will never exist unless we can make it and put it here -- the gift of free born men to govern themselves in their own way.....If you've lost interest in this cause of yours...we've lost the war, lost it completely, and the men we've left lying on our battle fields died for nothing whatever -- for a dream that died too early -- and may never come true!"

After a pause Washington left the group. But not another man left the camp. What Washington did -- and their responses -- saved them and the cause for which they fought.

Salvation comes to a man when he is saved from a sense of drift which destroys his purpose and integration. He begins to love justice and mercy. He begins to care about people and values, and in this concern is salvation. All down the centuries it is when men have been called to their best selves that they are saved. They are made to see what they have lost, what they need to gain, and are called back to themselves.

Take for example the visit of Albert Schweitzer to Chicago when he came to this country. A group of reporters met him and took down every word he said. A giant of a man, six feet four, he had a kindly face. Suddenly he asked to be excused from his interview and walked rapidly over to help an old lady with her suitcases. When he came back to the group of men he said, "Sorry to keep you waiting, gentlemen. I was just having my daily fun," he told the astonished reporters.

For him it was daily fun to help people. But in this way of helping people he was bringing salvation not only to them, but to himself. After this event, one of the reporters said, "This was the first time I ever saw a sermon walking." And that is a good way to put it -- a sermon should walk. It should be a little incarnation of some values. The reporter remarked, "A lot of stuffed shirts were unstuffed at that moment."

And this is what life is -- a long process of becoming unstuffed with false values and finding genuine ones to replace

them. All our lives we are becoming a soul that is saved or lost. We are saved by what we think, by what we feel, by what we do, what we share, what we give. We save ourselves by discipline, by work, by concern, by community.

If you ask how can a man save himself, we know exactly how to do it. Just as a man who by applying intelligence can fly through space, so man by applying values to his life, can find salvation coming to his soul.

Here is the way Emily Dickinson put the thought:

The props assist the house
 Until the house is built
 And then the props withdraw
 And adequate, erect
 The house supports itself
 And ceases to recollect
 The Auger and the Carpenter --
 Just such a retrospect
 Hath the perfected life --
 A past of plank and nail
 And slowness -- then the scaffolds drop
 Affirming it a soul.

THINGS WE CAN NEVER SAY

Life presents to us a mystery which includes not only our relations to ourselves and others, but to the world around us. There is much that we must relate to without delineating. There is much that we must accept without defining; there is much that we must respond to without knowing all.

Now this is an attitude that some people do not seem to understand. They want to know all, tell all, and be clear. But life can only be clear when we are secure enough to accept its insecurities; life can only be realized when we are ready to let it go; life can only be understood when we are ready not to define everything.

Let us begin with love. Love between people is a mystery. Yet some people want to put all of it into words. It is said that women want to hear the words, "I love you," and often if they hear the words take them for the substance. Let a great poet, William Blake, make this point for us:

"I told my love, I told my love,
 I told her all my heart;
 Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears,
 Ah! she doth depart.
 Soon as she was gone from me,
 A traveler came by,
 Silently, invisibly:
 He took her with a sigh."

Sometimes a sigh says what a word cannot; and all it means is that a sigh leaves something open and does not close the personal universe with a final word. And anyway, who ever

believed that in matters of love we should be so verbal? Love is far deeper than that.

There is so much in life that should be put in this class -- things that cannot be said. The Bible speaks of a type of man this way: "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." The trouble with that fool is that he put too much into words. About the time he has finished his sentence a man will walk by radiant with a faith in God.

Some people tell too much about themselves. About the time they have finished the last secret of the human heart they stand revealed and empty and exposed -- and lonely. They do not know the dimension of the sigh and the laugh and silence. Eric Hodges says the four-letter word for psychotherapy is talk. This is true enough; talk is a great thing and all of us need it at times. But we should be doing a great injustice to the human spirit when we do not speak about the other dimension of psychotherapy which is silence. The person who has never learned to cut his words short is slicing the spirit of life too thin. Tennyson said, "For words, like Nature, half reveal and half conceal the Soul within."

How profound indeed is that insight of Shakespeare: "I'll speak to thee in silence."

THE GREAT POSSESSION

The secret of possession is to let go. Jesus said you gain your life by losing it, and in the spirit of that approach to life also is the secret of the treatment of ideas. If it is true that we gain by losing, we possess by releasing, we are secure by freedom, and we arrive at the secret by not stopping.

The secret is first of all something that we are and not what we have. We can no more take it with us in our minds than we can in our hands. Life is not a possession but a trust, not a stopping place but a realm of understanding.

To make this point one may grasp the opposite of it, as put by some wit who said, "Life is what happens to us while we are making other plans." So! When we do not realize that life is in possessing in the loose way, then we find that it slips away in lack of awareness.

That is, we need to find life by appreciating, by understanding, by what we think and ask and seek. Life is not to be found in the answers we find, but the questions that we ask, for in the asking is the quest of the mind alive and so often in the answer found is the mind dying.

Our lives are surrounded by possibilities that we do not absorb because we do not become aware. David Grayson told the story of the book salesman who tried to sell a set of books to a farmer who in turn sold it to the seller himself. He sold it by the stories of the great things in the books. The seller went away thrilled with the things he could tell about his books.

Always our lives are surrounded by vast riches of possibility that we do not possess because we are not aware.

But after awakening we must keep alive by a continual re-experiencing of the possession. Not to call a thing our own a day longer than it really lives in our minds and spirit, is the way to be aware of the great possession. Life has its great ends which it may not know; the spirit has its mystery which it may never find out; the mind has its means of which it may be unaware.

But the great possession lies in that spirited realm of decision. With an upward look toward the blue sky and the vast unknown, the human spirit senses what it can never attain, and accepts with trust what it can never possess.

The secret is the great possession.

COSMIC RELIGIOUSNESS

Charles Darwin's father, Dr. Robert Darwin, was an atheist who chose for his son, Charles, the career of a country clergyman, simply because this seemed to be the most gentlemanly occupation for a youth, especially for a youth devoid of ambition and intellectual distinction. His son agreed with the choice and attended Cambridge University to prepare for the ministry.

Now Charles Darwin became more and more interested in science and eventually settled on the Beagle, a ship that was to explore the Amazon River basin. On this ship, the officers were amused by the simple orthodoxy of Darwin. He believed, for example, that creation took place exactly as the story is told in Genesis. He believed at that time in the separate creation of the species.

But later he was to write a book The Origin of the Species, which took an opposite position. What happened to Darwin's religion when he changed his scientific view? It just evaporated. To him religion was a simple explanation and when the simple explanation was overthrown, religion went with it. This is a most unenlightened viewpoint. He did what many people do: jump from believing too much to believing too little.

There are other ways of looking at these matters. Religion is not an explanation for anything. It is inspirational energy, an attitude of reverence; and in that attitude one may seek for answers. Anyone who thinks of religion as scientific answers for every question of life is in for headaches. But if

religion is for him the inspiration to live, the faith to go on seeking answers, he has found something that will help him over the hard places.

Here is an example of a great scientist who is at opposite poles from Darwin. His name is Albert Einstein, the man who give the theoretical foundation for the whole nuclear age. He writes:

"I maintain that cosmic religiousness is the strongest and most noble driving force of scientific research. Only the man who can conceive the gigantic effort and above all the devotion, without which original scientific thought cannot succeed, can measure the strength of the feeling from which alone such work...can grow. What a deep belief in the intelligence of Creation and what longing for understanding even if only of a meagre reflection in the revealed intelligence of this world, must have flourished in Kepler and Newton, enabling them as lonely men to unravel over years of work the mechanism of celestial mechanics.....Only the man who devotes his life to such goals has the living conception of what inspired these men and gave them strength to remain steadfast in their aims in spite of countless failures. It is cosmic religiousness that bestows such strength. A contemporary has said, not unrightly, that the serious research scholar in our generally materialistic age is the only deeply religious human being."

There are many voices in this mood. To jump from a simple religion that is uncritical to a disbelief that is equally unaware is to make the same mistake twice. Why can we not have more mature understanding of the problems of life and the lasting need for faith and understanding, for religions and science?

KEEPING FRESH BEFORE MYSTERY

The trouble with mysteries is that we get too familiar with them and settle down with them. The freshness of ourselves disappears and we assume that we know more than we have a right to. There is a need to shock ourselves at times by sharp questions that keep us facing the issues.

Wallace Stevens has lines that make the point:

You must become an ignorant man again
And see the sun again with an ignorant eye
And see it clearly in the idea of it.

A step to this "ignorance" might be to raise questions that keep us from settling down prematurely, from becoming too familiar with holy things. We must try to get clear from the intellectual under-brush so that we can see out in a fresh way.

We must try to face our rigid world, and invent a way to face the real world. For the world we inherit contains myths that we live by, which shaped us, as they shaped the people who gave them to us. As Stevens says, "There was a myth before the myth began." And we know that there will be a myth when the myth is done.

For new fictive creations are coming to pass all the while. There is first something that is a mere idea, that is not yet clearly imagined. But when we imagine it we can begin asking questions about it, and we may build a new ideational structure with the new fiction. We can build on our old fictions to imaginatively create a new outlook. For new fictive creations are being woven by our thoughts and dreams.

The danger is that we may form our fictions into a creed and while a creed leads to necessary stopping places, they may also be dead ends. Our creative ventures may be halted. So we must strive to strip ourselves of all mental entanglements for awhile and strive for that cleanness of insight that enables us to find what is alive for our minds.

To keep fresh before mystery, to be aware of the myth; to be susceptible to a new fiction, to keep the spirit moving, is all itself a kind of exploratory realm of the imagination. It is in one sense irrational, I suppose, to live by fictions, but in another sense it is the necessary assumptive approach, the fictive path, by which the rational and the orderly is maintained. For if we do not rationally deal with the irrational in our lives, we capitulate to it, and hand it over to those who do not believe in reason at all and who do not ask questions.

THIS IS RELIGION

Religion is something we see, something we believe, something we celebrate, and something we do. What we see is the vision that re-orientes our lives. What we believe is the philosophical structure of our ideas that gives us direction and purpose. What we celebrate is the beauty and form and sanctity of life. What we do is the expression of our faith in action.

Each of these four ways is necessary to a living religion. We must have vision for it is through faith and imagination and poetry and insight that we catch the great religious surmise that saves our souls. It is beyond mere logic; it is not limited to a rational structuring of our ideals. "Without a vision the people perish," says the prophet, and we know that this is true. Not only a people, but a person must have a vision. We must be guided by faith and insight. When this faith and insight are imaginatively structured we find that we are set upon our feet with courage and power.

But every vision needs testing in three ways: by thought and worship and by action. Every faith must meet a test somewhere and the first place is in coherent expression of ideas. True, no idea can ever contain all that a faith surmises. A faith that is not forcefully expressed in words and ideas remains to that extent unrelated to the ongoing life of the mind. What is it that the church says? What is it that theology intends? What is it that our total faith is trying to get across? Somewhere on the ends of these questions we must hang an answer to the overarching mystery of life. One must struggle to express the intentions of his faith.

Though we admit that no faith must be limited to our words, we must still try to say what we mean. This is the paradox of the religious life. Always beyond our words stands the impulse of religious life. But always our religious life to be meaningful must be put in words.

Religion is, however, far more than words. It is celebration -- art, music, form, liturgy, science, singing, prayer, reverence.

But religion requires yet another test. This is the test of action. It is what we do, what we say, that is finally important. "By their fruits ye shall know them" is the lasting test of faith. We must lead and teach. This is the way we preach. We must keep open-minded, but we must also focus on a realm of action. We must not bind men to a pattern. We must study and find a living framework of ideas, but finally we must try to live those ideas. We must get our help and power in what we do by, with, and for others.

Living religion is all of these ways of life. It is vision which re-orientes us to life and to truth. It is thought which tests this vision by logic and order of meaning. It is celebration and worship. It is life which puts the vision and the thought and worship to the test of action.

It is important to keep these in balance. The man of vision can easily become the visionary; the man of thought can easily be unrelated to life. The man of celebration can easily pass by on the other side. The man of action can easily become shallow. Religion is all of these: something we see, something we believe, something we celebrate, and something we do.

CAN MAN CHANGE HIS WORLD?

At the beginning of the American Revolution, Thomas Paine is reported to have said, "We have it in our power to begin the world over again." Men in those days felt that; they not only felt it they thought it; and not only did they feel it and think it, they proceeded to act on it.

But how do we feel about this today, in our time? Many people today respond that human nature is pretty much set, too complex to change, and that we have moved into a time of the world when all we can do is to get out of it what we can, or escape it. Such an attitude is based on a realistic notion that we cannot change the world overnight, but has gone too far with it to the point where we cannot change at all.

Is it not strange that at the very time when the world is so rapidly changing, moving from a rural agricultural age to urban industrial; from hard labor to automation; from guesswork to scientific work, placing us in the space age with all its possibilities -- is it not rather interesting that such people should be pessimistic about man on this planet? Why could we not see that men who have invented machines and bombs and space ships have it in themselves also to invent ways of living together in peace, ways of making a better life for all humanity?

Traditionally we have thought that two forces shaped what we did and were. The first was heredity. What we received from our forebears determined our destiny. The other view was that we were shaped by our environment -- that the world around us became our life determinant.

But in our time, many are coming to see that there is a third factor of great importance, and that is decision. Decision is how we view the world, our response to our past and to our surroundings. It may be that we will view our past and our present and conclude that nothing can be done about it. Or we may take the view that Thomas Paine took: We have it in our power to begin the world over again.

And if a person would not go so far, not make such broad claims, then at least one could make this claim: That one's personal decision is basic. When a person decides to try to know the facts, and move beyond knowing to caring, and beyond caring to acting, that man is in line to realize the fundamental importance of decision. For no matter what the pessimists say, their conclusions are simply decisions that they have reached. The only reason the world has ever made progress at all is that people who care have made decisions which answer the pessimists; not only answer them but show that it can be done. The world today is a far better place for more people to live in than it ever was before, and it could become better, not worse. There is nothing inevitable about this; it can and will be done if we decide that it shall be done. We too have it in our power to begin the world over again. This is the power of human decision of human faith. It is the greatest power in the world. And it is very much alive and waits for each individual commitment.

BELIEVING MORE THAN YOU PROVE

It is by keeping a belief in more than you prove that you keep alive the spirit of man to prove ever more than he has. The thought was stated by Carl Sandburg:

I am credulous about the destiny of man
And I believe more than I can ever prove
Of the future of the human race
And the importance of illusions
The value of great expectations.

It is well to be credulous about not only man's destiny but about his creative work. A late Encyclopedia Britannica Yearbook on Science reminds us that a man who died in 1941, just at the beginning of World War II, would not ever have heard of the following: color television, atomic power reactors, tubeless tires, the functioning computer, fiberglass boats, 60-second color pictures, man-made fibers, antibiotic drugs, artificial satellites, pictures from the moon, universal credit cards, polio vaccine, indoor baseball stadiums, heart and kidney transplants, jet aircraft, dial-anywhere telephones, and much, much more.

Think of the creations that have become possible in little more than the life of a student today. It is a world that is the product of research, to be sure, of careful laboratory techniques, and much weeding out of errors. There have been many exacting standards to be met.

But let us not overlook the fact that this world has occurred also because of the questioning attitude. The spirit of questioning and seeking is the very spirit that keeps us finding things that we never dreamed of before.

We have come into times of real problems of fuel shortages and the wasteful use of our resources. But if we can keep our problems in perspective and keep alive the spirit of seeking how to resolve them, to reach beyond our present technological know-how with that sustaining questioning spirit, that seeking attitude, we will find a way to meet our problems, we will find other know-how to resolve our difficulties. The next step is often to be found in attitude as much as technique. Some might call this illusion, but it is the illusion that leads to reality.

Moving into that world of things more than we prove means that we must have the courage and confidence to think about new things, to try some of them, to explore and in the process to let go of some old things and ways. We move on because it becomes more interesting and exciting to respond to these new challenges. Whatever the uncertainties about leaving the security of some older ways, we are attracted to the new possibilities. This does not mean the old things were wrong; it means that we have moved to some new ways of living and thinking. We let go of the old because the new serves our purposes better.

The world is more exciting than it ever was, and if we could only control our violence and growth, we could have a paradise on this earth. If we could only upgrade quality without upgrading numbers we could begin rapidly to improve.

THE ATTEMPT TO POSSESS LIFE

I read somewhere of a visitor who came to a friend's house and during the course of the evening's conversation expressed two fears that were bothering him. He said, "My first fear is that if I do not slow down I will have a heart attack." I think many people can understand that fear. He had a second fear. "If I don't hurry up, I won't be able to accomplish all the things that I want to do before I have my heart attack."

So this visitor stood in the midst of his fears, fears to do, and fears not to do. But both these fears come of a lack of trust in life, a lack of faith causing one to seek to possess life on his own terms and by his own powers. So many people seek to possess life, to grasp it, and to control it. People try this through the means at their command. If they are successful in earning money they try to possess life that way, forgetting what Jesus said about not being able to possess and find life at the same time. Others who are successful in influencing people try to grasp the root of power, forgetting what Jesus said about the kingdom of God being like a little child who is trusting.

It was Martin Buber, the famous Israelite philosopher, who wrote, "Existence cannot be possessed, but only shared in." I think this thought is worthy of reflection. Too many people want to move beyond being partners in life. They want to be masters in life. The result of the attempt to possess life is to lose it. "He that gains his own life shall lose it," are the solemn words of warning to us.

At a conference in Copenhagen on the economic issues of our time, someone said that the material problems were certainly important but the real problems are deeper: the boredom, the loneliness, the alienation from life. Then he went off in the direction of hoping for a political answer to such spiritual problems. We should not underestimate the powers of political answers. But the problems of boredom and loneliness and alienation need a deep spiritual answer. The people who rush at life to possess it either by rebelling against all the codes around them or on the contrary by espousing all the rules and regulations around them will not find the answer. For by rebellion and by conformity they themselves are only demonstrating two ways that men try to possess life.

What do we say to the businessman who never has time for thought, never takes time for a vacation, feels so compulsive that he must work all the time? As one said recently, "Haven't had a vacation in years. Can't do it. I'm surrounded by incompetents and no one can do the job but me." When a man has a metaphysical ache in his own soul, when he has not found peace in his faith and in his life, then he begins either to feel like a little cog in a big wheel or like a big wheel turning many little cogs. In neither case will he find peace because he's trying to possess life.

Peace must always come from innate trust, not from trying to possess. There is a domain in life that is made for trust and for sharing. Until a man learns that fact he will run fast and get nowhere. Perhaps until a nation learns the same lesson it will not get far either.

The first requirement for the individual in our time is to stop trying to possess all of life; to learn to trust again; to have faith and to overcome the philosophy that all is vanity and without meaning. When he has regained his faith in life and has learned to trust again, he will be content to let life flow in its own eternal paths. For we enter, and after a short span on this earth, we depart. Carl Sandburg has the lines:

Something began me
and it had no beginning;
Something will end me
and it has no end.

ON TRYING TO MANAGE THE UNIVERSE

Max Ehreman said in his dissiderata that "whether or not you realize it no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should." Many today do not have that basic trust. They want to manage the universe and God.

John warned his contemporaries about people like this. "Do not trust every spirit," he wrote, but "test the spirits whether they be of God." And then he adds: "There are many falsely inspired."

How does one know when he meets a false spirit? You can always tell them because they try to manage the universe. They try to control people's destinies through rituals or through the stars, another kind of ritual. They develop secrets and if followed they are supposed to be on the inside track.

The air is filled with this in our time. The religious air is over run with it. The readers and soothsayers and gurus and yogis are thicker than pre-biblical mystery cults. They have some special revelations which they tell you about which if you follow faithfully you will "see the light."

The genuine religious attitude leans toward trust and humility before God. "Blessed are the lowly of spirit for they shall be called children of God." And as Peter said, "Humble yourselves before the mighty hand of God." The truly religious attitude is one of agnosticism. One does not know over much.

Contrast this with so many today who claim to know exactly what to do, what is going to happen on some tomorrow.

These people may be quite ignorant but they are never uncertain.

If we wish to test the spirit of our time here are a few questions to ask:

1. Do the leaders profess to reveal the dark secrets of life?
2. Do the prophets profess to tell what is going to happen in the future?
3. Do the leaders give you a ritual that if followed may unlock the mystery of life?
4. Do these people never portray a questioning attitude, or always profess to have found the way?

If the answer is "yes" to these questions, you are dealing with that attitude that has certainty without information; that has a claim to truth without a knowledge of truth; that has the arrogance to announce a revelation of how the universe is run.

From the point of view of the biblical religious attitude it is a false spiritual pride. One might better be a bit more humble, ask a few more questions, and not presume so much that a revelation has indeed been declared. The universe has been operating a long while. We might better submit to it and not try to manage it. He that manages himself is better than he who tries to control the universe.

THOSE PROBLEMS NEAR AT HAND

I heard of a man who had perfect solutions for many of the world's problems. He knew just how to make peace, how to end war, how to get the nations together to do their job of living on this planet. He had a plan to end poverty and to put the nation on the path of truly great living.

The man himself was another matter. He was hopelessly at odds with his own family, he was divorcing his wife, he was pitifully in debt, and he had so many psychological problems that he was not an example of anything but confusion and defeat.

That is often the way it is with people. They know how to solve all the world's problems but they cannot solve their own. They know how to make peace in the world but their own hearts are filled with war. They claim to know how to end the world's poverty but their own lives are painfully impoverished. They claim to know how to get all the nations together in a new accord but they cannot get themselves together at all.

So it often is with us. A recent story in the New York Times told of The Center for The Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California. (This is a group of people who consider all kinds of social problems in the world and in our nation. Headed by the brilliant former head of the University of Chicago, Robert M. Hutchins, it has produced thirty-four drafts of a new constitution for the United States.)

But the members of the Center have found that it is one thing to write a constitution for the United States and another

thing to have a means of living together in some accord in their center. As one of the members wrote: "Solving the problems of the universe is a snap compared with solving the problems of the Center."

It is usually that way. The day-to-day contacts, the people you have to work with, live with, go to church with, serve with on committees -- to do this effectively is worth more than taking a kingdom. We think of some far-away kingdom that is to be; some new constitution that is to guide all the world into a new haven of freedom so that we can be at peace with one another. When we have to live at arm's length with our neighbors that is not so easy to do.

St Paul spoke of those in the midst of the inner circles who had "debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." And what he found a long time ago is to be found all about us today. Even great men who are scholars, the leaders of thought and research, can be very mean in little ways. They can forget all about the great ends of the earth that they talk about and focus on some very small matters of grievances and discomforts. He advised the church at Phillipi, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings." But that is exceeding hard to do.

How hard it is to see this simple point, and to assume that our idealism will wipe out all our bickerings at home.

It is silly to think that we are making the kingdom of God somewhere in far parts of the earth when we are making a hell right at home. Until men learn how to live together in peace at

close quarters it will not be easy to find peace far away.

The book of Proverbs says: "He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city."

TO FEED THE MIND AND NOURISH THE SOUL

The knowledge man has accumulated is remarkable. What he knows about biology, space, atoms, machines, combustion, things -- to pick words almost at random -- is truly astonishing.

Man has a deep hunger for theoretical comprehension. The fact that his scientific theories change is no hindrance to this hunger. Even though there is hardly a scientific theory held at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (say about 1760) that is still held today, the world of science is stable. I heard a man say that the course he taught at MIT in 1959 he could not teach today, so great have been the changes. Sometimes later scientific theories flatly contradict those of an earlier period.

Nothing about the world of the mind seeking and finding is what we could call absolute. The steady state of the mind is in the purpose of men to seek truth and the respect they have for the methods of seeking it. The scientists tolerate one another so long as their theories are open for inspection and men are willing to submit to the informed judgment of their peers.

Many scientists have changed their minds, but I do not know of one who has been forced to recant. If they cannot persuade their colleagues to see their point, they may keep trying. If they succeed the world may move to a new insight. But not until they do.

Now one question is: How does this scientific procedure differ from food for the nourishment for the soul? For so often we hear that men may tolerate relativity of judgment when it comes

science but that in matters of the heart and religion, there is need for the absolute.

In reply, I would say there is no essential difference. We do not need the absolute -- not in science and not in religion.

What we have is the same steady, persistent need for spiritual nourishment as we do for knowledge. But what the heart lights on as food is no more steady (and often far less so) than what science lights on as truth. Both areas have constant need for examination.

How man thinks of God today makes us aware that religion no less than science undergoes careful re-evaluation.

What abides is the hunger of the mind for truth and the hunger of the soul for celebration. What differs from time to time over the decades and centuries is what they focus on.

The conclusion of the matter is that religion does not stand on some pinnacle of righteous absolute knowledge not given to other disciplines. Religion is in the same human predicament as all other disciplines. Man hungers for God and meaning, and here and there he finds light and help that is dependable for a time. But let us not forget that the soul can make as many mistakes as the head. "Test the spirits," said St John. Or as the New English Bible puts it, "But do not trust any and every spirit, my friends." Exactly!

THE PREDICAMENTS OF LIFE

We should never stop asking questions we cannot answer. If the search for God is ultimately an illusion, it is the kind of illusion that is the texture of life itself. For if one feels that it is a weakness to find help in religion, it is no less a weakness to find help in any other realm whatever, whether it be psychotherapy, Yoga, Marxism, or deliberately induced "bouts of abandon" that are escapes from life.

The riddle of life is not to be dodged by calling things names, or trying to define predicaments out of existence, or even by calling them absurd. Our human predicament is simple enough: Without God men are in trouble, and one of the troubles is that he cannot presume to say what God is or is not. Yet with God men are in trouble still. We must search for an answer to life's riddles and yet we know that ultimately we shall not find one final answer. We may properly say that we have religion; yet who is satisfied with that statement? With our creeds or lack of them, with our pretty rituals or feeling no need of them, with our answers or lack of answers, still we face riddles beyond our questions and answers.

At any one moment of history in a man's life, religion at some point may possess him. He may be inspired by faith, caught up in a statement of that faith in intellectual terms, find himself acting out that faith in forms and deeds. Yet in his moments of deeper insight, he senses -- we may even say he knows -- that the faith that inspires him, the intellectualizations that compel him, the way his feet go at the time -- are not

fully realized in his life. In his perceptive moments he surmises that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

We may grasp a meaning that saves us, come to a decision that called forth the needed energy in us, and we are on the road to a new health and wholeness. Yet the goal eludes us, our apprehension is never complete, and the road is open.

So it is to be sensitively human. We are tormented by a presence in life -- Socrates called it a daemon -- a spirit that urges us on. Some presume to have solved the riddle; others presume that the questions are ridiculous; and still others know full well that the questions are not ridiculous, and that the pat answers are false.

This third group may come to a basic wisdom of life. They know that the quest is the possession; for the process is partly the goal. We resolve our dilemmas in part by the means of accepting the nature of the human enterprise. We know that we do not have God in a capsule -- any more than the ancient Hebrew -- and yet we know that since God works through the means of the questing human spirit, our quest is never hopeless even though it is never final. We never can find God by searching; yet it is by searching that we find him.

And yet -- and yet, we never quite do. And that is the predicament of life.

ON SECURITY

"But, Sir, if you will pardon me, what I want is something to hold onto." The speaker in this student forum was an earnest young man, with flashing eyes. "I want something to believe, some doctrine, some creed to hang onto that will give me security." He paused, and looked for an answer.

"There is only one thing in the world that will give you genuine security in life, and that is the insecurity that keeps you growing," I said to him. "You must keep asking questions, and piling up answers that fit your experience of life. The mark of a man is decision; in his decisions lie the marks of his character. Though a man has all the creeds in Christendom, if he has not decided for them, they are external to him. Whatever else religion is it is a decision of a man to live after a certain manner."

The conversation had turned to this topic. And I pursued it further. It is of course possible that a man may decide for some ancient view of life. In such an instance, the decision is fundamental. The danger is to assume that once a decision is made it is over. At this point religions degenerate. For no matter what a man decides in religion the nature of life requires that we keep up the decision process. Life is growth and it is characteristic of growth that it moves. When the ear of corn has set the stalk turns yellow and dies.

Possession of almost anything in the spirit which is assumed as a conclusion, a deed done and settled, darkens the living humanity within us. Freedom accomplished becomes something

less than freedom. Freedom is freedom only so long as it is functioning as freedom, as a tool and a way of life.

And yet at any one moment we may truly say we possess freedom. But we possess it as we may possess love, only when we are loving.

What security do we have? We have the security of the beat of the heart. When it stops we die. We have the security of the mind choosing, the spirit believing, the feet walking. We have the security of the life that struggles within us to be itself. We have that deepest of all securities that comes when a man affirms his life in faith and reason.

FACT AND OPINION

Reading in the paper I found an article with the title, "TV mirrors Morbid Fascination." The article depicts the unfortunate things television is doing to us through depicted violence; causing us to be less inhibited about violence, less sensitive to it, and thus permitting an escalation of violence, murders, shoot-outs and beatings.

But the thing that interested me in addition was a little box under the title that read, "Opinion." The editor was making it plain that the views presented were the opinions of the author. That is a good word to use when we are expressing views that we are not sure are as solid as a Supreme Court precedent. We see certain tendencies, for example, and we draw certain conclusions, and we arrive at what we think are defensible points of a view. But they are to be labeled "opinion" until we can nail them down with more solid evidence.

There is nothing wrong with expressing opinions. The trouble with too many people in this world is that they do not express their opinions. They hold back, are too timid, and on important subjects of life and society do not express their views about what they feel to be the case. It does not have to be the last word on anything, but it is a good solid word since they feel it and think it to be important to them.

There are some people, however, who never seem to distinguish their opinions from truth. The minute an idea enters their heads, and they rush forth with it, they label it truth, even "the truth!"

Opinions are all right to express, especially if they are arrived at thoughtfully, feel to be acceptable to us, and are what we think. But we might realize that our opinions are not yet the established truth of society nor the scientific truth about the universe. It is just our opinion. And yet, because it is our opinion, it seems good to us.

Now the important question is: when do we arrive beyond opinion to truth? That is the question that we should be dealing with all our lives. For there is no word more brutalized than the word truth. We use it for every conception that enters our heads, every vibration of feeling, every intuition or fancy that can be thought up. This for example was said by John Jay Chapman: "A thing is not truth 'til it is strongly believed in, that the believer is convinced that its existence does not depend upon him."

What the gentleman has expressed is rather an opinion, no matter how forcefully he feels it. For one may be mistaken at the height of his feelings, for feeling is not a criterion of truth. Feeling is involved in emotion and passion, and one may be badly mistaken though he feels a thing strongly. Truth can be calm as a whisper and usually is.

The danger in this discussion of truth and opinion is that strong emotional conviction may lead one away from truth rather than toward it. When a kind of "true believer" attitude takes over the less likely are we to arrive at what we may call truth.

The man who is willing to move beyond his opinions,

honorable though they be, to what may be considered truth, as the one who is ready to re-consider his solid first principles -- which may themselves be opinions -- and question them as to their credibility. He moves to the consideration of what his thoughtful colleagues may say, and he knows that if his firm opinions are not backed up by a learned community -- experts, that is, in some speciality in consideration -- he may be trading in opinions that may not hold up at all.

A war of ideas is always going on between cherished opinions and what the learned community is coming to think of as truth. If they happen to coincide, you are a lucky person, moving in the right direction. But conviction, or passion, or enthusiasm do not have an essential part in the evaluation. A reasoned judgment, a considered opinion that holds on, a position that is defensible -- well, that is the direction in which opinions have always moved toward truth.

OUR FINAL STANCE

"When we grow afraid of life and death," wrote Joshua Leibman, "let us have the sense of the trust-worthiness of the universe, of its encompassing embrace and its sustaining care."

Yes! The universe is trustworthy. It will sustain us. We may return to the earth and air and the sky with confidence. Luther, when asked where he would stand if driven out of the church replied, "Under the open sky."

Within the church or out, at the beginning of life and at its end, this is where man does stand. Only his little systems fool him that he stands anywhere else. He closes his skies with premature theologies, he locks up himself with a philosophy that blinds him to what is real, he belongs to organizations that pre-occupy him and he travels in narrow ruts of limited vision. The open sky he ignores and little does he see there that belongs to him. It seems unfriendly only because he wishes to ignore all about life that is tentative, insecure, limited. Was it Proust who said, "All our final resolutions are made in a state of mind that is not going to last?"

Man needs to hedge himself about with help, with friends, truth as he sees it, traditions that speak of long ago, ceremonies that blend the ancient with the modern and cement a relationship that is helpful and enduring. He needs these institutions because he is a man. He is a feeling, thinking, celebrating and acting animal. To be a whole person he must relate in meaningful ways to other men in religion, government, education, law and justice.

Down the centuries things do not change much, but our desires and wishes change and that makes the difference.

However much man needs to relate to others, he needs to remember the initial and final relationships. These are not to men and institutions but to the primordial, to the elements out of which we have come and to which we return. We are clay, the dust of creation with the breath of life. No crust of civilization is thick enough to reach the center of our being. The core of life is a tough residual element that is earthy and basic. Earth and air and fire and water -- these conditions birthed us and sustain us.

Let a man then learn first principles, elemental relationships. Let him learn to be humble and remove his shoes before the sanctities of creation. Let a man be not afraid of life but espouse it with all its risks and uncertainties. Let him believe that life is worth living in itself, the rough and tumble wildness out of which we have come, and he will have a new courage in his soul. No manufactured certainty, no put-up stability can ever equal the faith that accepts life, that finds this earth to be our native home, and knows that whether in life or in death we are at home in the great bosom of nature. The day and hour a man sees that, and feels it, and accepts it -- will be the light of a wondrous day for him. He will have a perspective on every institution of man. On earth and under the stars a man can stand with humility and trust, a human revelation of that which must always return to lone souls under an open sky, for the judgment, for the criterion. Such is the final stance in life and all others are preliminary.

All worlds lie folded in the arms of power:
 The live seed lifts its earth-load and is free;
 The filmy moon lifts the eternal sea.
 Armed with this might, the insect builds its tower
 And lives its little epoch of an hour.
 Man's giant thought, in ever-daring flight
 Explores the universe, the ancient night,
 And finds infinity even in a flower.
 But there is something that is greater still;
 The strength that slumbers in heroic will.
 Yes, there is something greater than them all --
 It is the high translunar strength that streams
 Downward on man at some imperious call
 And gives him power to perish for his dreams.

THE SPIRIT OF LIVING IN THE QUESTIONS
 (Ten statements toward a conclusion.)

1

About Convictions

A strongly held conviction is as likely to be mistaken
 as not.

We can state our opinions as we see things, be as
 reasonable as we can and still know that we may be mistaken.
 Truth is not a personal vision, nor what we feel to be so, nor
 some institutional platform, nor a revelation past or present,
 but the consensus of the best informed minds. The worst fana-
 ticism of the spirit come when we ally the passions of some
 commitment to the dogmas of a system of thought. Nietzsche warned:
 "It is a very popular error -- having the courage of one's con-
 victions; rather, it is a matter of having the courage for an
 attack upon one's convictions."

2

On Supporting Causes

More causes deserve questioning than support without
 question.

The world is filled with good causes and each year
 more of them appeal to us. Good people are persuaded to support
 these causes. But we need to apply the social tests to them
 and one of the most important is to examine whether the cause
 will gradually corrupt the world a bit more, especially where
 bigotry or fanaticism or special privilege are part of the rhe-

toric. As Pascal reminded us, "Men never do evil so fully or so happily as when they do it for conscience' sake."

3

Accepting Ambiguity

Those who assume that their ideas are right and that they have the truth are most likely in one or more areas to have overlooked something.

The ambiguity of life is often over-looked because we feel certain and conclude that we are right. Most ideas have ragged edges and our systems have their hours and days. Ambiguity is built into the very structure of human life and thought. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr gave this advice: "To have doubted one's first principles is the mark of a civilized man."

4

Holy Missions

There is no guarantee that holy missions, so called, are holy at all and not infrequently holy missions hide other motives that lead the world toward hell.

We can remember that we do not have to manage the universe for God. The important question is not how to get the world to fit us, but how we fit into this world. We will not likely have a human world of understanding until we knock the holy missions out of the human race. The universe can manage itself, and no doubt is, but what we humans have to manage are the competing visions, prejudices and patriotisms. Oscar Wilde wrote, "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person.

Give him a mask and he will tell the truth." The trouble is, he talks in his own person and what we get is the mask, usually claiming divinity.

5

Being Reasonable

Many people claim to tell it like it is, to state the facts, and think they are quite reasonable without a hint that being reasonable is the most difficult task man ever confronts.

We can try to be reasonable, knowing that we will probably fail in the endeavor. The opposite of being reasonable is not being emotional. The opposite of rational thinking is irrational thinking. One may think clearly at the height of emotion, and sometimes that is the only way he can use full human power to grasp a concept. Being reasonable is trying to be socially conscious of the full range of human discourse at the probing level hearing what the best minds have to say. Being reasonable is not doubting merely and Kierkegaard is right in this comment: "The method which begins by doubting in order to philosophize is just as suited to its purpose as making a soldier lie down in a heap in order to teach him to stand upright." Yes, for being reasonable begins with the substance of some belief, some commitment, a platform, or revelation -- and from there on to praise.

6

Sincerity and Truth

To be sincere is a high personal quality but it is no test of truth. "Life is not a spectacle or a feast," wrote San-

tayana, "it is a predicament." In a predicament, as we all are in one way or another, sometimes we confuse sincerity with validity. People are weak and cannot act; or they have power and do not know how to use it; they are in conflict and cannot resolve it; in distress and cannot find comfort; broken by tragedy and mishandle life. They are sometimes sincere and untruthful; sometimes honest but in the wrong; they sometimes pursue a path they were set on but not the goal they cherish. Sincerely looking for answers, they often settle for illusion.

7

Making Decisions

The persistent problem here is to distinguish the subjective wish, our self-concern, from the objective elements that should enter into the decision.

If we allow for the fact that our self is often hidden from ourselves, then we may see that too often we live by pretense to hide our confusion, emptiness, or fear. One can best make decisions at the peak experiences of life rather than in the middle of the night. Our persistent problem in a decision is to distinguish the passion to find reasons for things as we wish them to be, from the determination to find out whether it is in fact so.

8

Peace of Mind

If you have peace of mind, contentment, you are dead or dying spiritually.

There does not seem to be a place in life where we can outgrow the need to continue living in the questions. If it is true that certain people seem to stop their growth at a certain stage, it is also true that many senior citizens sense the hurt and incompleteness of life and lend their courage and thought to seeking resolutions. Joseph Joubert wrote, "All that is good in man lies in youthful feeling and mature thought." When we cease to question, we die spiritually, though we are content as we are.

9

Appeal of magic

Few things are more appealing than the glorious half-explained and the certainty of the partly mysterious, especially when through this magic our predicament is to be resolved.

The frailties of the human soul are everywhere evident; the visionary promises that men fall for, the answers that they will accept, the half truths that they will not question. The appeal of magic enables us to lie to ourselves, and to use thought to dispense with thought. Goethe reminded us, "Mysteries are not necessarily miracles."

10

Keep Questioning

Questioning is more difficult than accepting, for it implies enough security of the spirit to accept the insecurity of the mind.

Spirit-6

We need to find our trust and mistrust it; to find our beliefs and remind ourselves of their ragged edges; to find our answers and question them; to pitch our tent on the opposite slope from the general theological camp in order to get a perspective on the faithful army; and ^{to} set up a howl for questioning, and to request some humility in statements about knowledge and attainments, in the surmise that we are not likely to have the full truth yet. Edna St Vincent Millay warned us: "Set the foot down with distrust upon the crust of the world -- it is thin."

REFERENCES

Frontpiece

The quote from Rilke is from Letters to a Young Poet, Norton, 1954, translation by M. D. Herter, Pages 34, 5. Another version of the same quote may be found in Arthur Foote, Taking Down the Defenses, page 100, and is as follows:

"You will disturb your development in a most violent manner if you expect answers from outside to questions which only the most secret feelings of your calmest hours can solve. I beg you to be patient to all the unsolved problems of your heart and to care for the questions themselves. Do not search for answers to be given you: if given, they would be of no use, for you could not live them. For the present live in the questions and little by little and almost unconsciously you will enter the answers and live them also."

Introduction

The quotation from Montaigne may be found in his essay "On Experience," Book III, Section 13 toward the end. Donald Frame's translation is as follows, "And on the loftiest throne in the world we are still sitting on our own rear." The Charles Cotton translation is: "When seated upon the most elevated throne in the world, we are but seated upon our own breech." This same translation as revised by Haslitt and Wight: "Sits he on never so high a throne, a man still sits on his own bottom." It is a capital statement in any translation.

The Schleiermacher quotation is to be found in his little volume, Speeches on Religion to Its Cultured Despisers (1799),

Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, 1955, translated by John Oman, Page 148.

The Wallace Stevens quotation may be found in his Opus Posthumous, Knopf, 1966, page 178

The Locke statement on reason may be found in The Uses of Reason by Arthur Murphy, Macmillan, 1943, page 24.

The plea of Thomas may be found in Mark 9:24. See also Numbers 9 and 20.

Foreword

The quotation from Goethe may be found in a book that has been a great pleasure for me, Auden and Kronenberger, Faber Book of Aphorisms, Faber & Faber, Ltd, London, 1962, page 52.

Number 1

What is a good word for the term "men" that has so long contained the male and female? It is not a happy term for many women today, but there seems to be no good word as a substitute.

Number 2

The Blake quote may be found in Auden and Kronenberger, The Faber Book of Aphorisms, page 240.

The lines, "Theirs but to do and die," etc., are in Tennyson's poem, "The Charge of the Light Brigade." In the Home Book of Verse, by Burton Egbert Stevenson, Henry Holt & Co., page 2473.

Number 3

The statement about ultimate questions needing ultimate answers may be found in a volume, Sermons to Intellectuals, edited by Franklin H. Littell, Macmillan Co., 1963, page 5.

The Tillich quotation is from his The New Being, Scribners' 1955, page 118.

Number 4

The Ecclesiastes quotation is from 8:16, 17.

The Job quotation is from 23:8--14, Revised Standard Version. Nelson & Sons, 1952.

The view of God is from Whitehead's Religion in the Making Macmillan, 1926, page 94.

Number 5

The remarkable comment on negative capability I found in Walter Jackson Bates' splendid biography of Keats, John Keats, Harvard University Press, 1963, pages 248 ff.

Number 6

The quotation from Holmes I found in a delightful book, A Commonplace Book. by Charles P. Curtis, Simon and Schuster, 1957, page 201.

The quotation from Dorothy Emmet, is also from the same volume, page 202.

Number 7

Isaiah gives his great call to reason in Isaiah 1:18.

The Oscar Wilde quotation is to be found in Auden and Kronenberger, Faber Book of Aphorisms, page 31.

The Benjamin Franklin quotation may be found in Sayings of Poor Richard, Revell, page 56. An alternative version is: "If you will not listen to reason she will surely rap your knuckles."

Here are some other comments on this theme of reason, which may be important to think about in this age that has suspended reason in the hope of finding a better way to truth. Whitehead said in his The Function of Reason: "Reason is the counter agency which saves the world," page 34; and "The reign of reason is vacillating, vague and dim. But it is there," page 90. I agree with that and I disagree with the implied meaning of the title of a chapter of a book, "The validity of the irrational." The irrational means according to the Heritage Dictionary, "contrary to reason." But the non-rational is not contrary to reason; it is merely not easily amenable to reason. Quite a difference! I find no validity in the irrational, but much in the non-rational.

Hume wrote, "If we distrust reason we have no other principle to lead us into religion." Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Part I. Hume also wrote, "A wise man proportions his beliefs to the evidence," Treatise, the Essay on Understanding Part I, Section 10.

Aristotle called reason "A light that God has kindled in the soul" (from his Art and Rhetoric, III, x, 72).

Joseph Butler wrote, "Reason is the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself" (Analogy of Religion, II, 1736).

K.R. Popper in his Open Society and Its Enemies, writes on reason: "Rationalism is an attitude of readiness to listen to critical arguments and to learn from experience. It is fundamentally an attitude of admitting that 'I may be wrong, and you may be right, and by an effort we may get nearer to the truth'" (Volume II, page 213).

Montaigne writes (1:25) "Let him make him examine and thoroughly sift everything he reads, and lodge nothing in his fancy upon simple authority and upon trust. Aristotle's principle will then be no more principles to him, than those of Epicurus and the Stoics: let this diversity of opinions be propounded to, and laid before him: he will himself choose, if he be able, if not he will remain in doubt...for if he embrace the opinions of Zeno-phon and Plato by his own reasons, they will not more be theirs, but to become his own. Who follows another, follows nothing, finds nothing, nay, is inquisitive after nothing. 'We are under no king; let each look to himself' (Seneca). Let him, at least, know that he knows. It will be necessary that he imbibe their knowledge, not that he be corrupted with their precepts; and no matter if he forget where he had this learning, provided he know how to apply it to his own use. Truth and reason are common to everyone, and are no more his own who spake them first, than his first, than his own who speaks them after; it is no more according to Plato, than according to me, since he and I equally see and

understand them." Let all Footnote hounds and believers in who says an idea first has sole property rights to it, take note in the wisdom of Montaigne.

Number 8

Thoreau made this comment in Walden, in the Sandborn edition of his works, Volume 6, page 361.

Goethe in Spruche In Prosa (1819). Compare Thoreau, "We see only so much as we possess," Journal, June 22, 1839.

Number 9

The plea of Thomas "Help my unbelief" will be found in Mark 9:24. See also Number 20.

The poem fragment is from Aldous Huxley's poem, Orion."

Number 10

The little blue book came to me in the mail from Grand Rapids, Michigan. The number of people who leap from opinions to facts, from surmise to conclusion is really amazing.

Number 11

The Koestler quotation is from his book, The God That Failed, page 68.

Number 12

Tillich discusses ambiguity in his Systematic Theology, Volume III, University of Chicago Press, 1963, pages 43--45; 67--110; 138--182, 338, 348.

Number 13

I was unable to locate where Toynbee wrote this and I cannot remember where I got it.

Number 14

Eric Hoffer in The Ordeal of Change, 1963, Harper and Row, page 133. Also the same idea in The True Believer by Hoffer, Harper's 1951, Chapter 15, and also Reflections on the Human Condition, Harper's, 1972, Number 64.

Walter Bagehot in Physics and Politics, 1869, Chapter 5.
Victor Hugo (1802-1885).

Number 15

Kurt Goedel's theorem is discussed in the Encyclopedia Britannica, Volume 14, 1972, page 219C and in the article in the Foundations of Mathematics, p. 1101 of the same volume. That same predicament of reason is to be found in Montaigne's Essays 11:25 where he writes, "...but no reason can be established but upon the foundation of another reason; and so we run back to all infinity," page 292.

Number 16

St Paul's famous comment on knowing in part is found in I Corinthians 13.

The questions about finding out God is to be found in Job 11:7.

Will Durant wrote, "Tolerance grows only when faith loses certainty: certainty is murderous," in The Age of Faith, 1950.

Number 17

The definition of the absolute was taken from Webster's Dictionary.

In my checking I could not locate where Thoreau made this comment. If you know, tell me.

Number 18

Oscar Wilde's quip about the improbable and impossible I found in A Commonplace Book by Charles P. Curtis, Simon & Schuster, 1957, page 85. It comes from Wilde's Decay of Lying (1891).

Number 19

The quotation from Hume on the one correct opinion I would give half my kingdom to locate. Another reading through of the Treatise did not reveal it to me. The theological work in which I read it in the first place I have lost track of. I have checked with philosophers and they do not know where it is found and ask me to tell them. Which goes to show that when you find a quotation you want to keep, keep as well the location where you heard it or saw it or found it.

In the part of the Treatise I discovered this in re-reading it, the part concerning the principles of Morals, Hume writes, "The notion of morals implies some sentiment common to all mankind which recommends the same objects to general approbation and makes every man, or most men, agree in the same opinion or decision concerning it." That comes close but it is not what I read someplace.

A comparable notion is found in Elton Trueblood's The Life We Prize, where he writes, "If there are two equally valid moral ideals, then there is none, for they cancel each other," page 26. Seems a strange deduction. I should think it would be twice as likely to be right! Not cancelled. Various ways to look at the issue at hand is a strength not a weakness. Yet the moral monopoly idea seems to persist.

Hume's saying that "all poets are liars" may be found in his Treatise on Human Nature, Section X of Book I on the Human Understand, page 121: "Poets tho' liars by profession, always endeavor to give an air of truth to their fictions." He would have profited by a study of St Paul's "deceivers yet true."

Number 20

Hammarskjold has this flavor of uncertainty all through his work, Markings. He writes: "What gives life its value you can find -- and lose -- but never possess. This holds good for the truth about life."

Thomas with his plea so modern though old may also be found in Number 9 and is from Mark 9:24.

Number 21

The Blake quotation may be found in Auden and Kronenberger, The Faber Book of Aphorisms, page 27 and the Valery quotation, page 340 of the same volume.

This is a good volume for meditation or to take on a long walk. It is a great treasure.

Number 22

As in the former number this one also benefits by the Auden & Kronenberger book of aphorisms. The Joseph Jourbert one is to be found on page 76.

And likewise the Oscar Wilde quotation on page 87.

The John Drinkwater poem fragment may be found in his Collected Poems (two volumes) published in 1923.

Number 23

Thomas Paine wrote that in the Age of Reason, Part I Montaigne has a comparable idea in his Essays (II:12): "A pleasant faith that does not believe what it believes, but for want of courage to disbelieve it," page 211 of the Syntopicon edition. Paine did not have to get it from Montaigne any more than Montaigne got it from somebody else. And my authority for that idea is Montaigne himself. But I think I would believe it even if Montaigne or Paine had never said it. Which sort of supports Montaigne.

Number 24

The quotation from the Bible on creation of man is in Genesis 1:27.

Tolstoy wrote this in his A Confession and What I Believe. Oxford University Press, page 62.

Number 25

As we move more and more to Eastern religions and outlooks, there will be rigidities in that department, for the rigidity is in the mind and not in the system. We might remember the warning of Hume: "Generally speaking the errors in religion are dangerous, though in philosophy only ridiculous." This is from the Essay on Understanding, Part I, page 272.

Number 26

Perkins is still worth reading in this ecological age, for he was a pioneer who warned of many evils against nature. If we had read Perkins and heard him, we might have avoided many of our problems today.

A. J. Balfour said somewhere, and I cannot remember where, that "It is unfortunate, considering that enthusiasm moves the world, that so few enthusiasts can be trusted to speak the truth."

Number 27

Luther's comments to be found in Table Talk, Number 1687.

Number 28

Blake's statement may be found in Auden and Kronenberger's Faber Book of Aphorisms, page 340.

Judge Learned Hand in an Address on May 10, 1941, said:

"James Harvey Robinson used to say that we rose from the apes because like him we kept 'monkeying around, always meddling with everything about us. True, there

is a difference because, although the ape meddles, he forgets, and we have learned, first to meddle and remember, and then to meddle and record. But without the meddling nothing would have happened. All that glorious array of achievements: battle-ships, aeroplanes, relativity, the proton, neutron and electron, TNT, poison gas, sulfathiazole, The Fifth Symphony, the Iliad, The Divine Comedy, Hamlet, Faust, The Critique of Pure Reason, Das Kapital, the Constitution of the United States, the Congress of Industrial Organizations.....All this from just monkeying around!"

From that delightful A Commonplace Book by Charles Curtis, page 110.

I think this quotation may also be found in Learned Hand's fine book, The Spirit of Liberty.

Number 29

Dorothy Sayers, an expert on the mystery story has produced some thoughtful books on Religion: Creed or Chaos, The Mind of the Maker, Current Religious Thought, 1947. Begin with the latter.

Number 30

Shakespeare said this in Julius Caesar, I,ii, 134.

The quotations from Augustine are to be found in On Christian Doctrine, Chapters 21, 22 and 23.

The Scripture is from Deuteronomy 13:1--3.

Will Durant wrote in his Age of Reason Begins, 1961, that "Religions are born and may die, but superstition is immortal." And that judgment states the intensity of the problem for

thought in religion and why we are likely to have a continual crop of superstitious people. For they believe out of a lack of sound faith and not from a rational judgment about faith. In fact man is religious once in a while but he seems ready in an instant to be superstitious.

Number 31

The article by Herrstein may be found in the Atlantic Monthly for September 1972.

The Valery quotation is in the Auden and Kronenberger, Faber Book of Aphorisms, page 351.

Number 32

One may see the ship that was built so many thousands of years ago in the Cairo museum, where are also contained many beautiful artifacts of the civilization of that time. It is a truly remarkable collection.

The frontpiece of Chapter Two in Reinhold Niebuhr, The Irony of American History.

Number 33

The story of the library of Thomas Jefferson may be found in The Britannica Yearbook for 1972, in the Introductory Article by William Benton.

Number 34

For a discussion of Xenophanes see Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy, pages 40, 41 Also Jaeger, Paideia, Vol 1, Passim. This whole discussion is worthy of pause and consideration. The quotation from Whitehead has been used before in Number 4 and it will be quoted again in Number 74. But it is one of the most realistic approaches that one can imagine. You can never define God but you can never escape the issue. It is one of the perennials of the human spirit. Only the fool says there is no God and only the fool defines God.

Number 35

Montaigne said this about writing in his essay, Vanity, Book Three, No. 9. The title of this piece from that Essay, "Add, do not correct." What a wise man Montaigne was!

Number 36

Edmund Burke in Reflections on the French Revolution, 1790. Deuteronomy: "They sacrificed to devils, not to God" in 32:17. The Revised Standard Version: "They sacrificed to demons which were no gods."

St Paul's message may be found in Acts 17.

Harlow Shapley's quote is on page 131.

Will Durant has the remark that "Religions are born and may die, but superstition is immortal" (The Age of Reason, 1961).

Number 37

Socrates' "healing hand of argument" may be found in Amiel's Journal.

The idea comes from T. H. Huxley in The Coming of Age of the Origin of the Species where he writes, "History warns us that it is the customary fate of new truths to begin as heresies and end as superstitions,"

Number 38

Jesus and the idea of being called "good" are to be found in Luke 18:19.

Thoreau's writing on virtue is to be found in the Journal, February 8, 1841. He also wrote in Walden, "As for doing good, that is one of the professions which is full."

Thoreau also wrote: "Our vices always lie in the direction of our virtues." This comes from A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, Thursday, 1849.

These ideas on vice and virtue sound a lot like what Montaigne said in his Essays, "I find that the best virtue I have has in it some tincture of vice." (Book 11, Chapter 20.)

Number 39

St Paul's famous question is to be found in Romans 7.

Shakespeare's idea is to be found in Measure for Measure, 11:1:38.

The genesis story is to be found in Genesis 2 and 3. And the fall was a rise -- the insight as a result of violation.

Jesus' idea about the prostitutes going into the kingdom before virtuous persons is to be found in Matthew 21:31.

Augustine's idea of loving and doing what you like was used as a justification for people to use force in quelling Donatist violence. See Encyclopedia Britannica, Volume 2, page 756 (1972).

Number 40

This distinction between the passing and the permanent as a behavioral insight is one we shall not easily set to rest, not now nor next year, nor maybe forever.

Number 41

Ludovic Halvey (1834-1908) was a poet and a playwright and novelist and a collaborator with Henri Meilhac. Among his works are many librettos for operas including Bizet's Carmen. He wrote the drama, Frou - Frou and the novel, L'Abbé Constantin. I am unable to place this particular quotation in his writings. Someone quoted it and I never forgot it. It seems so apt and penetrating.

MacMurray says this in

Number 42

William James in Chapter 10 of his famous Psychology.

Cicero said this in

Number 43

I do not know where Will Rogers said this, but I have heard that he said it all of my life.

Jesus on perfection in Matthew 5:48.

Confucius us this wisdom in The Analects and other places. He also has this to say, "When you have faults, do not fear to abandon them. See Robert Ballou, Bible of the Word, Viking, pages 379-467.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936) was an English journalist and author, a critic and polemicist. He was skilled at turning statements such as Lord Chesterfield's, "Whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well," into readings such as this: "whatever is worth doing is worth doing not well."

Number 44

There is a Yiddish proverb that truth rests with God alone and a little bit with man. If we could remember that we should be more hesitant with our labels.

Number 45

Perhaps even in the good society we will need moral distinctions, moral opposition, that will help us clarify where we stand. Perhaps the need of the opposition is built into the very fabric and growing and maturing.

Sometimes Thomas Paine's quip that "moderation in temper is always a virtue, but moderation in principle is always a vice"

is taken to be a charge for immoderation in other things such as Barry Goldwater's remark before the Republican National Convention in 1964 that "extremism in the defence of liberty is no vice and moderation.....in the pursuit of justice is no virtue," forgetting that immoderation in anything democratic makes democracy impossible.

Number 46

Liang and other leaders in psychological thought reveal that tendency to take over the entire domain of the non-rational not to mention the transcendent. Very like theologians.

James Froude's quotation will be found in Auden and Kronenberger, The Faber Book of Aphorisms, page 76.

Number 47

I found this comment about Sibelius in the music notes at a performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The note was written by James Lyons.

The Shenstone comment may be found in Auden and Kronenberger, The Faber Book of Aphorisms, page 285.

Burns made this comment in The Third Epistle to Mr. Graham of Fintry, 1791.

The Keats quotation as almost everyone knows is from his "Ode to Beauty."

Number 48.

The New English Bible is translated at times with power that the King James version does not have. It is a translation

in the style in which we feel and think , and yet still preserves good English.

The Picard quotation is from his book on silence.

The Goethe quotation is from Auden and Kronenberger, The Faber Book of Aphorisms, page 101.

Number 49

This scripture is to be found in Matthew 25:40.

St Paul has a statement along the lines of this piece that goes, "May the eyes of your understanding be enlightened," in his letter to the Ephesians 1:18.

Number 50

A good discussion of equality is in Henry A. Meyers, The Equality of Men, Cornell University Press.

Number 51

The Montaigne quotation is to be found in the Essays, but I also found it in The Faber Book of Aphorisms, page 75. The same is true of the other one which I also found in The Faber Book of Aphorisms, page 63.

Number 52

This quotation attributed to Jesus is to be found in Matthew 5:9.

Number 53

Emerson said this in

"This is the day of the Lord" is to be found in Psalms 118:24.

Shakespeare said this in Henry IV, Part I, V, iv, 81

The time of life is short;
To spend that shortness basely were too long,
Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere.
But thought's the slave of life and life time's fool;
And time, that takes survey of all the world,
Must have a stop..."

Number 54

The poem by Stephen Crane is to be found in his Collected Poems, Knopf, Number 24, page 26.

Archibald MacLeish wrote this in Continuing Journey, (Houghton Mifflin) page 77.

This is from Frost's poem which he personally read at the Kennedy Inaguration in 1961.

Number 55

Robert E. Neale's piece is to be found in The Heart Has Its Seasons, Regina Press, 1971, page 125.

The Peter Viereck lines are to be found in Charles P. Curtis' splendid volume, The Commonplace Book, published by Simon and Schuster, page 118. The rest of the lines are:

Art, being bartender, is never drunk
And magic that believes itself must die."

Number 56

This is from Proverbs 12:17--20.

Number 57

Jefferson also said, "Error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it." This is from his Inaugural Address, delivered March 4, 1801.

Judge Learned Hand's comment is a classic example of the liberal spirit and approach to ideas; it is also the one in which we can best defend human rights.

Judge Hand also wrote, "You may ask what will become of the fundamental principles of equity and fair play which our constitutions enshrine; and whether I seriously believe that unsupported they will serve merely as counsels of moderation. I do not think that anyone can say what will be left of those principles: I do not know whether they will serve only as counsels; but this much I think I do know -- that a society so riven that the spirit of moderation is gone, no court can save; that a society where the spirit flourishes, no court need save, that in a society which evades its responsibility by thrusting upon the courts the nurture of that spirit, that spirit in the end will perish." This is to be found in his The Contribution of Independent Judiciary to Civilization published in 1943.

And in 1951 his work, Morals in Public Life, contains this passage: "I beseech ye in the bowels of Christ, think that 'ye may be mistaken.' I should like to have that written over the portals of every church, every school, and every courthouse, and I may say, of every legislative body in the United States."

Number 58

Yeats, W. G., Collected Poems, Macmillan, 1967, page 184.

Number 59

Montaigne, in his Essays. "Know thyself" is the inscription at the Delphic Oracle. It is from Plutarch's Morals, although it is commonly attributed to Thales as one of the seven sages. Bertrand Russell says in his History of Western Philosophy that philosophy began with Thales.

Number 60

It is rather interesting in the study of people to note how someone will consider his fiction to be solid truth with no inkling of how other cultures may feel about their fictions. We need a new toleration of fictions. This poem of Stevens' (Collected Poems, Knopf, 1967, page 380) is worth time and thought for anyone interested in living in the questions. K.R. Popper writes, "What is a myth if not an attempt to rationalize the irrational?" This question is to be found in Volume Two of his Open Society and Its Enemies, page 231.

And Augustine wrote, "There are some things which we do not believe unless we understand them, and there are other things which we do not understand unless we believe them," in a sermon on Psalm 118, Sermon XVIII, 3.

And Nietzsche wrote, "Without his logical fictions, without measuring reality in a fictitious absolute and immutable world, without the perpetual counterfeiting of the universe by number,

man could not continue to live. The renunciation of all false judgment would mean a renunciation, a negation of life." This comment is to be found in A Commonplace Book by Charles P. Curtis, published by Simon and Schuster in 1957. The page is 185.

Number 61

William James in The Will to Believe, "This life is worth living, we can say, since it is what we make it, from the moral point of view. Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact."

Pascal says, "...the chief malady of mankind is a restless curiosity about things he cannot know; and it is not so bad for him to be in error as it is to be curious to no purpose." This quotation is to be found in Pensees, No. 18.

Elsewhere in this volume we quote Learned Hand about the importance of monkeying around -- for in that manner we found that curiosity to no purpose served a great purpose. It is always foolhardy to claim to know what man cannot know. The proper attitude is one of humility before the unknown, which is a different thing from saying it is not so bad to be in error. For it is always unfortunate to be in error. And the chief malady of mankind is not a restless curiosity about things we cannot know but the erroneous assumption that we know them. If curiosity is kept alive, if we continue to live in the questions, we are on the right tack. The trouble is not curiosity but those convictions, even revelations, man comes upon and settles down with for life.

St Paul in Romans 12:2.

Kipling in his great poem, "If."

Number 62

This poem by Shelley is in his Collected Works published by the Oxford Press.

The Frontpiece for Part III is from the Apocrapha, II Esdras, 14:25.

Foreword Note to Part III

The Yeats quotation is from the Second Coming, The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry, Norton, 1973. This anthology is edited by Richard Ellman and Robert O'Clair.

Number 63

The creation story is to be found in the second and third chapters of Genesis. Charles P. Curtis writes: "Unless we use what freedom we have in the work we do with others, we have none. For when all is said, and so much of it so well said, we are left with the sobering thought that what freedom we don't use simply does not exist. There's no such thing as unused freedom. Freedom is not only perishable, it is a quality of an activity. It's like fresh fruit. Unless you eat it, it's soon garbage."

This quotation is to be found on page 129 of his A Commonplace Book.

The story about George Marshall is from the same volume, page 166.

Number 64

Montaigne in his Essays.

St. Paul in Romans 7.

The double-minded man from James 1:18.

Number 65

The Yeats poem is found in The Collected Poems of Yeats, Macmillan, 1967, page 184.

Number 66

The Yeats poem is from The Norton Anthology, referred to above, page 131.

Number 67

The poem of Kipling may be found in Hymns of the Spirit, Beacon Press, Number 380.

The Lichtenberg quotation may be found in The Faber Book of Aphorisms, page 147 and page 332.

Number 68

John Pfeiffer, in The Emergence of Man, Harper and Row, 1969 pages 4, 13 and 450.

Number 69

The Kierkegaard hint is to be found in The Faber Book of Aphorisms, page 239.

Number 70

The Melville quotation story I read about somewhere and now I cannot remember where

The Thoreau bit is from the Journal in 1850

Number 71

Dylan Thomas, The Collected Poems, New Directions Book, 1957, New York. The lines quoted about revising are to be found on the Frontpiece in the Note. Other poetry quotations are to be found on pages 29, 128, and 77.

Number 72

Kekule said this somewhere and I picked it up, but it is careless of me to have to admit I do not remember where.

I. A. Richards wrote The Meaning of Meaning with C. K. Ogden but I cannot recall where I got the quotation.

Number 73

Job 31:26

Solomon, Song of: 6:10

Montaigne in Essays, Book 1, Chapter 25. This whole chapter is a discussion of education.

Thoreau, in his Journal under November 16, 1851, writes a good passage about recognizing current prophets and original thinking.

This great hymn is Number 75, in Hymns of the Spirit, published by Beacon Press. One stanza goes:

Lord that word abideth ever;
Revelation is not sealed;
Answering now to our endeavor
Truth and right are still revealed.

Hebrews 4:12.

Number 74

This is a quotation from Whitehead again, and you have met him before in this same quotation in Number 4 and 34. It is a great idea worthy of repeating at least a hundred times a year. Of course there is always that view of religion in a humorous vein that is made by Ambrose Bierce: "A daughter of Hope and Fear, explaining to Ignorance the nature of the Unknowable." This quotation is to be found in the Devil's Dictionary.

Number 75

A panegyric on what religion is, topped by Jacob Trapp's great lines to be found in Hymns of the Spirit, Number 352.

Number 76

Faith Baldwin wrote this in one of her "circulating library" novels and I don't know which one.

Montaigne, 111:9, in his Essay on "Vanity," to be found on page 464 of the Cotton Translation.

Number 77

I went into Palermo since this was written. It is still there, but many people would hardly know it. It now might be a good place to go to escape the rat race.

Number 78

This is to be found in Maxwell Anderson's play,

I read this in a newspaper report about Schweitzer which I have since lost.

This quotation from Emily Dickinson is to be found in The Complete Poems as No. 1142. These works were edited by Thomas H. Brown and published by Little Brown in 1960.

Number 79

This is to be found in The Poetical Works of Blake, (Oxford, 1914) under the title "Never Seek to Tell All Thy Love."

"The fool hath said in his heart...etc. Psalm 14:1

This is Tennyson in the Prologue to "In Memoriam". (1850) 5:1
Shakespeare wrote this in Cymbeline V:4.

Number 80

I do not know who made this statement. David Grayson in his volume Great Possessions makes this point. It is old and out of style for our times, but pertinent nonetheless.

Number 81

This is from Albert Koestler's The Act of Creation Macmillan, 1964 page 262.

Number 82

Wallace Stevens writes this in his poem "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" to be found in his Collected Poems, page 380. The bit about myth is in the same poem on page 383.

Number 83

Proverbs 29:18.

Jesus discussing fruits on living, Matthew 7:16.

Number 84

Thomas Paine discussing The Rights of Man, Common Sense, and The Age of Reason, Freethought Press Association, New York

Number 85

This is from Carl Sandburg's Collected Poems (Harcourt Brace, 1970) under the title "The People, Yes" on page 464.

Number 86

I cannot remember where I read this story of the man of fears.

Martin Buber in Good and Evil: Two Interpretations, 49. He writes elsewhere: "Only man with man provides a full image," Between, page 205. A thought in the mood of the first quotation is this one: The world is not comprehensible, but it is embraceable..." This is from "Pointing the Way," Essays, page 27.

Carl Sandburg's Collected Poems, page 509.

Number 87

Max Ehremann's 'Desiderata' is to be found in his Poems published by Crescendo Publishing Co., Boston 1948, page 83.

This on false inspiration is to be found in I John 4. Peter, in I Peter 5:6.

The Beatitudes of Jesus, Matthew 5

Number 88

The New York Times Magazine for June 17, 1961, page 51, carried a story on The Center for the Study of Democratic Insititions.

II Corinthians 12:20

Phillipians 2:14.

Proverbs 16:32.

Number 90

This bit of Scripture on testing spirits is to be found in I John 4:1.

Number 91

The hardest thing to learn is that a living question can give real security; and it is also hard to learn that an answer that is premature may be the occasion for further insecurity. This is a topic too little discussed.

Number 92

This article appeared in the St Petersburg (Florida) Times.

John Jay Chapman, page 321 in The Faber Book of Aphorisms.

Number 93

This quotation is from Joshua Leibman's Peace of Mind published in 1946 by Simon and Schuster, New York

Luther said this at the Diet of Worms, April 18, 1521.

This is from Proust "Things don't change, but by-and-by our wishes change."

The Bible says we are "clay" in Isaiah 64:8.

The poem, "Power," was written by Edwin Markham.

INDEX

- Agreement,
 - as a test of truth, No. 56
- Agnosticism
 - Ecclesiastices on, No. 4
- Ambiguity, No. 37
 - living with, No. 12
 - and liberal way, No. 12
- Amiel, Henri
 - unbelieving epochs and supersition, No. 30
- Anderson, Maxwell
 - on George Washington, No. 78
- Answers
 - unquestionable, No. 1
 - no ultimate, No. 3
 - feeling one has the, No. 10
- Argument
 - based on assumption, No. 15
 - Socrates and, No. 37
- Astrology, No. 30
 - Harlow Shapley on, No. 36
 - Augustine on, No. 30
- Assumption
 - begin with, No. 24
 - and irrationality, No. 24
- Attitude
 - altering lives, No. 61
 - feelings in, No. 16
 - of finding out, No. 61
 - truth related to, No. 56
- Aristotle
 - unmoved mover, No. 49

Augustine
 on doing what you like, No. 39
 on superstitions, No. 30

Bach, J. S., No. 47

Bagehot, Walter
 pain of new ideas, No. 4

Baldwin, Faith
 on time, No. 76

Balfour, A. J.
 on not pressing a point, No. 52

Belief, beliefs
 compulsive, No. 6
 Melville on, No. 20
 Paine on, No. 23
 remarks on, No. 72
 Richards on, No. 72
 standing on, No. 60

Believers
 in more than you prove, No. 85
 radical, No. 11
 in things not so, No. 23

Blake, William
 imagination and proof, No. 2, No. 29
 on passions and good, No. 21
 on telling your love, No. 79

Brown, John
 mentioned, No. 65

Buber, Martin
 on existence, No. 86

Burke, Edmund
 on superstition, No. 36

Butler, Joseph
 on function of reason, Footnote to No. 7
 By-passed, No. 77

Carson, Johnny
 magic on show, No. 55

Center, the
 is not weakness, No. 65
 when the...holds, No. 66

Certainty
 lives in devotion to find out, No. 16
 two types, people regard to, No. 17

Change
 changing world, No. 84

Channing, William E.
 organized AUA, No. 51

Chapman, John Jay
 on truth

Chesterton, Gilbert
 on perfection, No. 43

Church
 not a club for saints, No. 38

Compulsive beliefs
 Emmet on, No. 6

Compromise, No. 29

Confucius, No. 43

Convictions, No. 52

Copernicus
 man of scientific world, No. 14
 mentioned

Corruption
and moral growth, No. 41

Crane, Stephen
pursuing, poem on; No. 54

Crothers, Samuel M.
mentioned, No. 10

Curtis, Charles P.
on freedom, Footnote, No. 63

Dante, Alighieri
pictures of early Christian world, No. 13

Darwin, Charles
mentioned, No. 74, No. 77
on Beagle, No. 81

Decision, No. 63
to believe differently, No. 13
must be continuous, No. 91
in a vacuum, No. 29

Defeat
mood of, No. 67

Deuteronomy, No. 36

Dickinson, Emily
poem about house, No. 78

Disbelieve
ability to, No. 23

Doubleness
in our nature, No. 64

Doubters
rabbinic student, No. 9
fanatical, No. 11

Doubting
Kierkegaard on, No. 4, Conclusion

Dreams
and proof, No. 72

Drinkwater, John
aspiration, poem on; No. 22

Drucker, Peter
on Nazi take-over of universities, No. 54

Durant, Will
on lesson of philosophy, No. 7

Einstein, Albert
 $E = MC^2$, No. 32
on cosmic religiousness, No. 81

Eliade, Marcia, No. 58

Eliot, T. S.
every ending a beginning, No. 22
on reality, No. 13

Emerson, Ralph W,
dissenter, No. 51
mentioned, No. 65
on reading, No. 59
strong present tense, No. 53

Emmet, Dorothy
on inevitability in beliefs, No. 6

Equality
meaning of human, No. 50
source of human, No. 50

Ethical, the; No. 40

Facts, No. 37
 and opinions, No. 92

Fanaticism, No. 45

Feeling
 that you are right, No. 16

Final stance, No. 93

Finding out,
 spirit of, No. 28

Franklin, Ben
 on reason, No. 1

Freedom
 Curtis on, Footnote, No. 63
 means to end, No. 17
 story of, No. 28

Freud, Sigmund
 mentioned, No. 74, No. 77
 on reason, No. 7

Frost, Robert
 something we withheld, No. 54

Froude, J. S.
 system of science and religion, No. 45

Gallileo, No. 27

God
 on defining, No. 22
 on finding, No. 90
 name for trustworthy affirmation, No. 60
 statements about are human, No. 15
 unspeakable aspects of, No. 74
 Whitehead on, No. 4
 not proved, No. 15

Godel, Kurt
 on undecidable propositions, No. 15

Goethe
 on growth, Foreword to Part One
 phenomena as theory, No. 48
 understanding and possession, No. 8

Grayson, David
 on great possession, No. 8

Halvey, Ludovic
 on virtues and vices, No. 41

Hand, Judge Learned
 statement on Frontpiece, Part Two
 on monkeying around, Footnote, No. 28

Hawthorne, Nathaniel
 on Melville, No. 20

Haydn, Franz, No. 47

Hernstein, Richard
 article in Atlantic Monthly, No. 31
 attacked at Harvard, No. 33

Higginson, Thomas W., No. 65

Hitler, Adolf
 answer to, No. 24

Hodges, Eric
 on four-letter words

Hoffer, Eric
 man of words, No. 14

Holmes, Chief Justice Oliver W.
 on compulsive beliefs, No. 6
 on doubting first principles, Conclusion

Hume, David
 poets as liars, No. 15, No. 19
 on reason, Footnotes to No. 7
 on way to be right, No. 19

Humility, No. 4
 mark of a religious person, No. 16

Hutchins, Robert M.
 head of Society for Study of Democratic Institutions, No. 88

Huxley, Aldous
 poem on feeling fire, No. 9

Huxley, T. H.
 on equality a fiction, No. 50
 on heresy and superstition, No. 37

Ideas:
 dangerous, No. 33
 answer one you disagree with, No. 31
 pain of new, No. 14
 and themes, No. 14

Identity, No. 59

Illusions, No. 43

Impossible and improbable, No. 18

Infidelity
 Thomas Paine on, No. 23

James, William
 altering lives, No. 61
 on performance of maxims, No. 42

Jefferson, Thomas
 on answering an argument, No. 57
 on equality, No. 50
 on errors of opinion, No. 31

Jesus
 good out of Nazareth, No. 26
 on being good, No. 38
 on peacemakers, No. 52
 on service, No. 49

Job
 on original relationships, No. 73

Joubert
 defining God, No. 22

Keats, John
 on beauty, No. 47, No. 5
 on negative capability, No. 5

Kierkegaard, Soren
 on doubting, Conclusion, No. 4

Kipling, Rudyard
 hymn of prayer, No. 64
 meeting triumph and disaster, No. 61
 poem, not to reason why, No. 2

Koestler, Arthur
 moves to new answer, No. 51
 on doubter, No. 11
 on act of creation, No. 81

Koussevitsky, Serge, No. 47

Labels
 defining by, No. 44

Lian, R. D.
 on prayer, No. 46

Melville, Herman
 late developer, No. 70
 Moby Dick, No. 70
 on belief, No. 20

Mistakes
 Will Rogers on, No. 43

Montaigne
 double in ourselves, No. 64
 know thyself, No. 59
 on self-difference, No. 51
 sitting on one's own behind, Introduction
 story of people and choice, No. 76

Morality, No. 40
 and the ethical, No. 40
 impulse to do good, No. 42

Mozart, A. W., No. 48

Mystery
 keeping fresh before the, No. 82

Myth
 living by, No. 60
 Pepper defines, Footnote to No. 60
 Stevens on, No. 82

Near at hand problems, No. 88

Negative capability
 Keats on, No. 5

Newton, J. fort
 defending orthodoxy, No. 56

Niebuhr, Reinhold
 statement, Frontpiece, Part Three

Lichtenberg, Georg
 on what opinions do to us, No. 67

Liebman, Joshua
 on trusting the universe, No. 93

Lincoln, Abraham
 on equality, No. 50

Locke, John
 on reason, Introduction

Luther, Martin
 secret doubts of, No. 51

Magic
 hunger for, No. 55

MacLeish, Archibald
 on something wrong in America, No. 54

MacMurray, John, No. 41

Man
 age of, No. 70
 created in image of God, No. 24
 may become, what he, No. 68
 saved, how; No. 78

Markham, Edwin
 poem on human spirit, No. 93

Marsh, J.P.
 man and nature, No. 26

Marshall, George
 on decision, No. 63

Marx, Karl
 on criticism of religion, No. 41

McClelland, David
 -achieving society, No 32

McTaggart, J.M.E.
 on reason, Introduction

Nietzsche, Frederik
 attacking one's convictions, Conclusion
 on convictions, No. 37
 on fictions, Footnote, No. 60

Non-believers
 rigidities, in, No. 25

Nourish the soul, No. 89

Open sky, No. 92

Opinions
 confronting settled, No. 26
 fact and, No. 92

Opposition
 needing the, No. 45

Optimism, No. 54

Original relationships, No. 73

Paine, Thomas
 on changing world, No. 84
 on infidelity, No. 23

Palermo, Maine
 on being by-passed, No. 77

Parker, Theodore, No. 65

Pascal, Blaise
 on moral convictions, summary statement, No. 2

Perfection
 tests on, No. 43

Pessimism, No. 54

Pfeiffer, John
 story of man, No. 68

Picard, Max
 on silence, No. 48

Popper, K.R., Footnote to No. 7

Possessing life, No. 86

Possession, the great, No. 80

Power to perish for dreams, No. 93

Prayer, No. 46

Predicaments, No. 90

Present tenses, No. 53

Priestley, Joseph, No. 51

Principle
 being a man of, No. 29

Problems
 T.V. Smith on, Frontpiece, Part One

Proof
 opinions not proof, No. 92
 metaphysical foundations of, not proof, No. 15

Proust, Marcel
 on resolutions, No. 92

Proverbs
 on ruling spirit, No. 88

Questioning national habits, No. 54

Questions
 choice, No. 62
 key to, No. 2
 living in the, No. 72
 Rilke on, Frontpiece

Reason
 Bible on, No. 7
 Butler on, Footnote to No. 7
 Franklin on, No. 7
 Freud on, No. 7
 Hume on, Footnote to No. 7
 Popper on, Footnote to No. 7
 recall to, No. 7
 Wilde on, No. 7
 Solon on, No. 31

Religion
 assumptions in, No. 15
 reality is dependable, No. 74
 this is religion, No. 83
 to be religious is, No. 75

Richards, I. A.
 on belief, No. 72

Right
 feeling you are, No. 16
 one way to be, No. 19

Rights, human, No. 57

Romans
 on being transformed, No. 61
 on knowing God, No. 48

Salvation
 how man is saved, No. 78

Sandburg, Carl
 believing more than you prove, No. 85
 something beyond us, No. 86

Santayana, George
 on predicaments, Conclusion, No. 6

Say
 things we can never, No. 79

Sayers, Dorothy
 on following principles, No. 29

Schweitzer, Albert
 on helping others, No. 78

Search
 for what we do not have, No. 22

Security, No. 91

Seneca
 reference to, No. 26
 on self-importance, No. 59

Shakespeare, William
 negative capability, No. 5
 outdated metaphysics, No. 49
 on silence, No. 79
 on sin and virtue, No. 39
 on stars and men, No. 30
 on superstition, No. 36
 on time, No. 53

Shapley, Harlow
 on astrology, No. 36
 on stars, No. 86

Shaw, George Bernard
 on Shakespeare, No. 70

Shenstone, William
 on critics, No. 47

Sibelius, Jean
 on being in and out of favor, No. 47

Sin
 and enlightenment, No. 39

Socrates

- knowledge and virtue, No. 10
- on argument, No. 37
- tormented by presence, No. 90

Spiritual presence, No. 48

St Paul

- being transformed, No. 61
- knowing God, No. 48
- knowing in part, No. 16
- on good and evil, No. 39
- on love, No. 1
- on strife, No. 88
- on testing spirits, No. 89
- persecuting, No. 51
- putting on the new man, No. 68

Standing for something, No. 52

Stevens, Wallace

- believing beyond belief, Introduction
- getting new ideas, No. 82
- notes toward fiction, No. 60
- on reality, Introduction

Superstition, No. 36

- Amiel and, No. 30
- Augustine on, No. 30

Testing the spirits, No. 87, No. 89

- criteria of truth, No. 87

Thales

- on knowing self, No. 59

Theological disclaimer, No. 32

Thomas, Dylan

- on revising, No. 71

Thomas

- on help for unbelief, No. 9, No. 20

Tillich, Paul

- and ambiguity, No. 12
- word of the Lord, No. 3

Tilton, Alice

- on mistakes, No. 43

Toynebee, Arnold

- civilization a voyage, No. 13

Trapp, Jacob

- noted, No. 75

Truth

- belief and proof, No. 85
- Chapman on, No. 92
- how originated. Introduction
- on being slippery, No. 26
- out of favor, No. 13
- speaking, No. 56
- truth and opinion, No. 92

Ultimate

- answers, No. 3

Unanswered element, No. 22

Unbelief

- two kinds of, No. 27
- Luther on, No. 27

Unbelievers

- we all are, No. 9

Uncertainty

- resting in, No. 17

Undecidable proposition, No. 15

Universe

- on trying to manage the, No. 87

Index-18

Valery, Paul

on thinking and being, No. 21

thoughts and emotions, No. 31

Vices, No. 38

Viereck, Peter

on believing magic, No. 55

Virtues, No. 38

Halevy on, No. 41

Washington, George, No. 78

Whitehead, Alfred North

on God, No. 4, No. 74, No. 34

Wilde, Oscar

on the impossible

on masks, Conclusion, No. 3

on reason, No. 7

prayers answered, No. 22

Words

in the beginning, No. 14

people of, No. 14

Wiesel, Elie

story of student and doubt, No. 9

Yeats, William Butler

center, poem about, No. 65

Ceremony of Innocence, No. 58

Second Coming, extract from; No. 66