

1930

Trends of Modern Religion


Edward Scribner Ames

William Clayton Bower

Jesse Allen Jacobs

Wayne A.R. Levs

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.acu.edu/crs_books

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons](#), [Ethics in Religion Commons](#), [History of Christianity Commons](#), [History of Religions of Western Origin Commons](#), [Missions and World Christianity Commons](#), [New Religious Movements Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ames, Edward Scribner; Bower, William Clayton; Jacobs, Jesse Allen; and Levs, Wayne A.R., "Trends of Modern Religion" (1930). *Stone-Campbell Books*. Book 164.
http://digitalcommons.acu.edu/crs_books/164

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Stone-Campbell Resources at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Stone-Campbell Books by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ ACU. For more information, please contact dc@acu.edu.

Trends of Modern Religion

By

EDWARD SCRIBNER AMES
WILLIAM CLAYTON BOWER
JESSE ALLEN JACOBS
WAYNE A. R. LEYS



A summary of the discussions at the first mid-winter meeting of the Campbell Institute in the Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago, December 30 and 31, 1929. Reprinted from *The Scroll* of the Institute in *The Christian*.

Introduction

DURING the current year the Campbell Institute has completed a third of a century of history. It seemed fitting that this significant event should be celebrated by a special program that would in some way relate the thinking of the Institute to the factors of change that have made these three decades among the most significant in the history of human culture.

A cursory survey of contemporaneous thought discloses the fact that humanism in its various forms is one of the most fundamental responses of the modern mind to these factors of change in our social, economic, and intellectual life. It was decided, therefore, to make humanism the motif in the program. Consequently, the program had a rather definite sequence and structure. It was decided, moreover, to select those aspects of the problem that touched most vitally upon the fundamental concerns in the tradition and ideals of the Disciples. So that the group attempted to orient itself, not only to the general American scene, but to that scene as it appears from the historical approach of the Disciples.

The first session was devoted to a presentation of the general point of view of humanism. This set the framework for the entire conference. The person of Jesus has historically been fundamental in the thinking of the Disciples. Consequently, the second session was devoted to a consideration of the implications of the results of the historical method for the person of Jesus. The third session was devoted to the adjustment which the

church as an organized Christian institution is making to the changing situations. The final session was devoted to a consideration of the implications of the newer methods of psychology regarding the soul for evangelism, which has always been a central concern of the Disciples.

The program was quite informal. Each session began with a presentation of facts and viewpoints. The presentation was followed in each instance by an informal discussion which conformed to the pattern of group thinking. The Common Room of the Disciples Divinity House, with its glowing grate fire, provided an admirable setting and atmosphere for this sort of procedure.

It was with the conviction on the part of those present that they would be glad to share this experience with the members of the Institute who could not be present that these memoranda are made available in printed form.

WILLIAM CLAYTON BOWER.

University of Chicago.

Humanism

By EDWARD SCRIBNER AMES*

PROFESSOR A. Eustace Haydon opened the midwinter program of the Campbell Institute with a very interesting statement of his view of humanism. A fuller account of his interpretation of religion may be found in the very readable book he has recently published, *The Quest of the Ages* (Harpers). His main thesis is that religion has always been striving for man's welfare and happiness, but whereas in prescientific times the quest was involved in superstition, it is now possible to pursue this goal with the aid and guidance of scientific knowledge and methods. He admits that the gods once symbolized this process, and that in successive epochs the gods have been reinterpreted in the light of varying cultures. He is doubtful, however, whether God can be identified with this social, remedial process in our time, because God has come to function too much as a compensatory conception. The supernatural is too remote, too detached, too little affected by any organic relation to the natural sphere and method of human life. For him, the idea of God is bound up too much with miracles, revelations, external authority, prayer, and magical salvation.

He finds in certain ethnic religions, particularly in China, the recognition that human well-being and the ethical relations between man and man should be set in the foreground, and he looks for

*Professor of philosophy in the University of Chicago; minister of the University Church of Disciples, Chicago; author of "Religion," etc.

that country to be able to appropriate humanistic religion more easily, because more consistently with its past, than Christian lands. Christians have been depending too much upon a transcendental deity and expending too much time and resources in praising him for his inscrutable ways of governing the world. His glory has been put above man's welfare. What is needed now is to turn scientific ingenuity to understanding the exact conditions of man's health, wealth, social cooperation, and the means of fulfilling these basic needs, as well as the so-called spiritual interests. These may stand out more clearly in their own right and importance if we turn away from questions of immortality and the theological dogmas of all varieties.

Sentences from his book express this position clearly and appealingly: "Often the towering figures of the gods loom so large as to obscure the main action of the play." "The divine supernatural realm became the home of truth, of beauty, of goodness, of the ideal." "Actually the earthly, natural, human world is the proper scene of the great drama of religion." "The creative religious forces of every age are where the masses of common folk are toiling together with aching shoulders at the problems of life; where stout-hearted men and anxious women, sheltering wide-eyed little children, seek still the ancient goal—the joy of living—despite all the discouragement and tragedy of an inhospitable, uncontrolled environment."

The reason our industrial, machine age is not the fulfillment of the humanist's dream is just because it is occupied with industry and business more than with human values. This enormous power of our steam age might be directed to alleviating man's conditions of living: "The dawn

will be near when the machines are at last freed from the grip of greed and subjected to the beautifying of life; when a new educational science shall develop the individual to full capacity for cooperative service and make him a thinker capable of dealing with facts; when a new organization of society shall so distribute the resources of the earth as to give to every last, lonely child of man at least a free opportunity for release of all his powers."

What we have here is a "planetary" religion, whose focus is the chief dweller on the planet, and whose goal is the supreme development of this planetary creature: "The planet may be said to have come to consciousness of itself in man. With that consciousness there is involved, on the human level of evolution, the possibility of a purposive development of future history more adapted to the type of value-quest represented in the human line." "The religions of mankind are products of the human quest for the ideal world."

Haydon's view of evil is important, for every theory of religion has to meet this problem. He recognizes evil as a fact but as a fact that may be dealt with: "The face of evil overlooks the human scene. Never was it possible for any religion to forget for long the menace or the mockery of that mysterious presence," but "a final optimism, or at least meliorism, dominates them all." "The one heartening thing is that we now recognize that evil has nothing ultimate about it. Taken naturalistically, the world and human nature are in the making. Both may be changed. Evil is a contingent and separable element, and therefore is subject to removal by intelligent adjustment of personal relations."

It is clear from such statements that humanism is not to be identified with determinism, fatalism,

mechanism, or materialism. Religion is for this humanist an idealistic, spiritual quest but within the terms and values of our human experience. It is a joyous life in the light of a high and noble endeavor, by means of enlightened and rigorous scientific methods of living and working. It does not feel cramped by the elimination of eternity when there are so many interesting and urgent things to be done in time. There is no use worrying about one's metaphysical soul when the incarnate spirit needs light and air and a place in the sun.

In the discussion which followed Professor Haydon's address it was pointed out that Christianity has had for a long time a vigorous social service program, and that Christian lands are actually much in advance of countries like China which he credits with a deep soil for the development of a human welfare religion. The answer obviously is that in time China may excel when she gets the schools and the machines. It was further suggested that humanism may be too intellectualistic. Great popular religions have always had much symbolism, have appealed to emotional experience, and have used terms like God without first trying to define them, or giving them up when they are defined. So far humanism has proposed scarcely any ritual or symbolism for public assemblies and it is yet largely a theoretical, lecture-room religion.

Current Views of Jesus

By JESSE ALLEN JACOBS*

THERE IS a widespread inquiry regarding the significance of Jesus for contemporary religious movements. The Jerusalem missionary conference and similar gatherings are expressions of this interest. It is also a central factor in current denominational controversies regarding the theory and the methods of missionary enterprises. In the so-called goodwill movements the inquiry has centered around ways and means by which Christians and Jews can constructively cooperate in practical enterprises. In what way would the acceptance of some of the more recent interpretations of Jesus and the Christian movement affect cooperation between Christian and non-Christian groups? In what way would it affect the message and method of the modern Protestant minister? What adjustments would a religious body such as the Disciples of Christ be compelled to make?

The foregoing queries are particularly pertinent for the Disciples of Christ since from the beginning the members of this "communion" have attempted to make the supremacy of Jesus central in all their programs. They have taken great pride in being a "New Testament people." They have sought to restore the ordinances and practices of the New Testament churches. Their slogan has been "No creed but Christ, the creed that needs no revision." They have not been particularly

*One of the general secretaries of the Religious Education Association, Chicago.

concerned about the Old Testament. Some of the ultra-conservatives admit that the Old Testament is of comparatively little significance since it was "fulfilled in the New Testament." Disciples ministers have warred against "divisive creeds" and "man-made laws and canons." They have contended that if the denominations would do away with "sectarian names" and become "Christians only" they would find in the "teachings of Jesus" a platform for Christian unity and a valid Christian faith. Although there have been many minority protests against this method of interpreting Jesus, the foregoing description is probably representative of 75 per cent of the membership of this "communion." *Jesus is the final norm of authority.*

Members of the Campbell Institute, even though representing many points of view, were interested in facing the modern queries regarding the person of Jesus in the spirit of the conference method rather than that of controversy. Accordingly, they secured Professor Shirley Jackson Case, eminent New Testament scholar, to present, in the light of recent gospel criticism and investigations, the most important of current views of Jesus. Professor Case did not attempt to defend any particular theory but presented in frank and unbiased manner a number of points of view. His address was made the basis for a round table conference which followed.

The following sketch includes the high points in Professor Case's address:

The Beginning of Gospel Criticism

The supernaturalism of Jesus was not questioned until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Up to that time most scholars had accepted Jesus as one supernaturally conceived and the

center of the cosmos. Jesus lived a supernatural life during his earthly ministry. He performed a variety of miracles. He was supernatural in death. He arose from the grave on the third day and later sat down at the right hand of God. Jesus was, for all practical purposes, the functioning God of the Christian movement. The God of the Hebrews had gradually faded out of consciousness. Without compunction or questioning, the foregoing concepts of Jesus were woven into sermon, song, poem, text-book, and into the very fabric of the Christian movement.

In the early nineteenth century the rationalists felt the necessity for explaining away some of the crasser forms of supernaturalism in order to make Jesus more attractive. The first attempt was to reinterpret some of the miracles. These skeptics had no intention of doing harm to the person of Jesus or of questioning his fundamental supremacy. They wanted to make faith in his supremacy more reasonable and beautiful. These attempts at reinterpretation came before the rise of scientific gospel criticism.

The year 1838 marked the beginnings of gospel criticism. The modern method did not get well under way until 1863. It came on rapidly during the seventies, however, and has reached its climax in present-day scholarship. The result of this thorough-going criticism and investigation has led to a more critical use of "the sources" and particularly of the New Testament. Most scholars are agreed that "the sources" do not permit the interpretation of Jesus as a God dictating minute instructions for all generations. *He must be understood in terms of his times and generation.*

Three Views of Jesus

First, there is the Jesus whom men worship. This is the traditional and conservative view of

Jesus. He is the one to whom men pray; the one who created the world and was with God when he said, "Let us make man in our own image." He was supernatural in birth—born of the Virgin Mary. He was supernatural in his performance of miracles, and in his death and resurrection. This is the Jesus of the Roman Catholic church and of at least 75 per cent of Protestantism.

Second, there is the Jesus whom men obey. He is a unique individual who speaks authoritatively. Although not surrounded with so many forms of supernaturalism as the Jesus men worship, he is nevertheless the center of authority. He is not God, but is a unique individual through whom God is made manifest and real to men. He is a kind of new Moses. This is the Jesus of Harnack and others of his school. Miracles in their cruder forms have disappeared. The central factor is the ethical and moral idealism implicit in the teachings of Jesus.

This is the Jesus who dominated the Jerusalem conference. It is the Jesus back of the teachings and programs of Peabody, Rauschenbusch, and other prophets of the "social gospel." This is the Jesus championed by Shailer Mathews in his earlier books. (Mathews, however, has repudiated his earlier theories in his recent book, "Jesus on Social Institutions.") According to this theory the proper conduct for the church is to be found in the teachings and practices of Jesus and can be authenticated by the gospels. It is a basic assumption of those who talk about "The Jesus Way of Life." It is the theory back of most of the so-called "liberal" ministers of the Protestant churches. It is a modified form of authoritarianism.

Third, there is the Jesus whom men admire. They admire him without feeling the necessity to

obey him. Authority is not the norm for those who accept this theory. Jesus is admirable not because he has supernatural qualifications but because of the high order of his attainments. He faced the problems and issues of his day without flinching. He was driven forward on the crest of great and powerful convictions. His convictions were so deep-seated that when once he had assured himself that he was right he was willing to follow that way even though a cross and death awaited him at the end of the road. His purity of character and his loftiness of ideals were reflected in the manner in which he met the difficult situations of his day. This admirable Jesus gives courage to the modern man to meet his own problems and perplexities with the same courage and high ideals with which Jesus met his problems.

This Jesus comes over into the twentieth century not as a God uttering commandments but as a *glorious memory*. He inspires men to do for their age and times what he did for his age and times in Palestine. He does not speak a final word on the great social problems of our day. He held many notions that men of the twentieth century would not find tenable. This Jesus did not expect a social revolution or evolution to come to pass. He was not a good social idealist in the sense of bringing about a new kingdom here on this planet. He was primarily interested in the cultivation of a life that would make men like God and would prepare them to be fit to enter the kingdom of God. He apparently expected a catastrophic and immediate end of the world—the world he had known during his ministry.

Obviously believers in this Jesus cannot turn to him as the basis for authority and the maker of creeds and laws and ordinances for the twentieth century. They appreciate Jesus and seek

to know him in terms of his own day and age. This in no way minimizes his contribution to civilization.

The Round Table Discussion

The foregoing resume of Professor Case's address has necessarily been presented in caption form. In like manner, the following abridged report of the discussions must not be considered as a complete statement of the problem. A great deal of discussion centered around Professor Case's third picture of Jesus.

What is the value of Jesus?

1. There is nothing in the modern Christian movement, if interpreted from the third point of view, that depends on the authority of Jesus. Christianity is a convenient name we use to tag our religious attainments. The standards and values we think we have gotten directly from Jesus have been made by ourselves. Some of these we have made comparatively recently. This is not evidence against the validity of Christianity but a point in its favor. It is indicative of a growing religious movement. Christianity is a living, dynamic growing movement and not a mere hang-over from the first century.

Then, too, the picture of the admirable Jesus is made on the basis of what we think is admirable today. We did not get our criterion from the sources. We read our own conceptions and theories of life into the words of Jesus. This is what even the most conservative missionaries often unconsciously do even though they do ascribe their values to some unique deposit carried over from the first century. This is a healthy sign. It indicates a growing religion. Religion has no meaning apart from specific groups and situations. It

depends upon a living people who are engaged in putting forth their best efforts in order to aid men in effective living.

Such a view of Christianity makes the gospels take on new vitality and meaning. It not only keeps before the Christian the memory and example of the admirable Jesus but enables him to use the admirable qualities in the lives of the great men of his day.

Several objections were raised to this point of view. Some felt that such an interpretation left out the role of poetry, art, and symbolism and overemphasized the intellectual factors. How could we get hold of the imagination of the average individual without Jesus as the focal point of his attention? How could we get him to be loyal to a "Christian movement" that ignores the authority of Jesus? Irrespective of our interpretation of Jesus, is he not an invaluable symbol?

2. Certain members of the group contended that people who have been reared to believe in and to worship Jesus as God should not be encouraged to abandon this conception of him. People live by art, music, and symbolic expression quite as much as by reason. If the traditional views of Jesus actually work, people should continue to use them. They should be warned, however, against exhausting their emotions and energies on symbols or accepting symbols as ends in themselves.

3. If a minister were to abandon the authoritarian concept of Jesus, could he be intellectually honest and preach "the social gospel?" Yes, several admitted. How? Instead of saying that Jesus said thus and so it would be appropriate and honest to say that if Jesus were here today

he would likely say thus and so. If the authoritarian concept is abandoned we do not care who said a thing as long as it is good and true and helpful. In Christianity, however, all men know Jesus. Large use should be made of his memory and admirable life. The Christian churches have organized a unique set of values around the memory and person of Jesus. Jesus should be of tremendous value in the enrichment and enhancement of the Christian movement.

It was suggested that the parables of Jesus are of particular value since they represent Jesus' method of dealing directly and significantly with the real problems and issues of his times. Such parables as the wise and foolish virgins show unusual insight both in theory and method.

4. It was pointed out that all the great historic religions of the world are facing crucial problems of rethinking and reorganization. They are faced with grave and disconcerting questions. Their most sacred traditions are being questioned by leaders of this scientific age. Even the founders of these religions have not been spared from searching questions. The same type of questions that are being asked about the person of Jesus are being asked about the prophets in the other great religions. The tendency is to break abruptly with these traditions or to become defenders of the *status quo*.

Abrupt breaks with these historic experiments and experiences is not good pedagogy. There is a necessity for a continuity with the past. This can be obtained through an intelligent reinterpretation of ancient symbols in terms of contemporary needs and issues. Intelligent ceremonial dramatization will help.

5. To defend religion in the abstract is an indication of a lack of vitality. When people be-

gin to discuss religion as something to be defended it may be a sign that the vitality has gone from the experience for which the term religion stands. The word religion does not appear in the New Testament. There cannot be a religion apart from religious people. The word religion is merely a symbol. It is something like the term "triangle." The term triangle cannot be defined apart from a specific situation. What religion? Yours? Mine? Calvin's? It depends on the specific situation what the reply is to be. Probably one of the reasons why the Christian churches are so busy discussing religion is because they have not made adequate adaptations to current situations and needs. Since public schools, playgrounds, Boy Scouts, and other agencies have robbed them of some of their older functions their leaders think they must have a specialty. That specialty is *religion*.

Trends In Institutional Religion

BY WILLIAM CLAYTON BOWER*

THE DIFFICULTY of reading such complex facts as are involved in this problem should put one on his guard against sweeping generalizations or incautious conclusions. At best one should attempt only tentative interpretations.

Factors of Change

Religion faces the problem of adjustment to one of the most profound periods of change in the history of human culture. These changes are so deep-going that they affect not only the processes and structures of social living, but our fundamental values and our whole outlook upon life.

These changes in our contemporaneous culture are due to the interaction of three basic factors of modern life. The first, and most fundamental, is the method of science which is the outgrowth of the naturalistic tendency of the Renaissance. The second is industry with its elaborate technology applied to practical processes. The third is the democratization of social life as a form of associated living.

The influence of the operation of these factors upon religion is profound—far beyond the perception of the vast mass of the religious population.

*Professor of religious education in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago; author of *The Curriculum of Religious Education, Character Through Creative Experience*, etc.

Trends in Current Religion

Over against these changes in contemporary life are two identifiable trends in current religion.

One is the secularization of religion in the form of the new humanism. This movement is non-theological. In its radical forms it is agnostic, if not atheistic. As a movement it is concerned with man's career upon this planet, and its purview is limited to the here and now. As yet limited for the most part to the intelligentsia, it is beginning to permeate increasing areas of the religious population and is extending its influence not only in the West, but in non-Christian lands as well. It has become a movement with which historic Christianity must deal.

A second pronounced trend is taking place in institutional religion.

This institutional trend manifests itself in an unprecedented erection of church buildings. Vast sums are being expended in impressive and elaborate structures. And, interestingly enough, these buildings are of the Gothic type whose symbolism is derived, not from the values of contemporaneous culture, but from the culture of the middle ages.

This institutional trend also manifests itself in an unprecedented development of liturgy. The worship of the church, in keeping with its architecture, is being "enriched" with forms and ceremonies, many of which, like the architecture which houses them, recover their patterns from the religious experience of the middle ages. One of the pronounced aspects of this liturgical tendency is a contemporary leaning toward Roman Catholicism.

Still another manifestation of the institutional trend consists of an unprecedented group of "ac-

tivities" of one sort or another. Some of these are organizational. The modern church has become a vast "plant" with manifold operations requiring a staff of administrators. The modern pastor finds his managerial functions pressing increasingly upon his prophetic function. Others of these activities take the form of social service of a multitude of types.

A third pronounced trend in contemporary religion is a decided reaction toward fundamentalism in large areas of the church and in considerable geographical sections.

In the face of these unprecedented developments in church building, liturgy, and extended activities there is, however, a growing feeling among many in the church that religion is losing its sense of orientation toward the changing conditions of modern life and that there is a waning sense of gritty reality and compelling vitality in its beliefs and practices.

The Meaning of These Trends

What, then, are the meaning and significance of these trends? Do these developments constitute an adjustment of current religion to the changing conditions in our modern culture? Or are they escapes from the realities of the modern world and compensations for the incompetency of traditional religion to deal with these changing conditions?

From one point of view these trends could easily be interpreted as an uncritical and complacent acceptance of industrialism in an acquisitive society. There are those who believe that traditional religion is supplying the sanctions for the social and industrial *status quo*. If this is a correct reading of the facts, then it may follow

that unreconstructed religion is unconsciously but inevitably becoming the priest of the *status quo*.

It must be admitted that there are two considerations of great weight that point in this direction. One is the fact that the wealth and processes of our industrial and acquisitive society are in the hands of Christian people and that these people are willing to finance these expensive operations. If religion were prophetically critical of these processes, the question at least arises whether those who control the capital of the industrial order would so willingly finance these religious operations.

The other consideration is the fact that the zealous activities of institutional religion in social service are not for the most part reconstructive, but only of the ameliorative type. They are not directed, for the most part, to changing conditions and the factors that produce them, but to relieving them. To be sure, there are a number of outstanding exceptions to this general statement, as, for example, the investigation of the steel industry and the effort of the church in behalf of temperance and child welfare.

From another point of view these trends may be seen as evidences of the escape of religion from the realities of the present social situation or as compensations for its incompetence in dealing with it.

It cannot escape critical attention that these trends within unreconstructed religion are institutional. Nor can one overlook the significant fact that historically the cultus has for the most part flourished in the decadent periods of vital religion. Neither will the critical observer overlook the fact that, historically, institutional and liturgical religion has, when it has existed contempo-

raneously, been in radical conflict with prophetic religion.

To be sure, it may be pointed out that the building of beautiful ecclesiastical structures and the development of colorful liturgy may be in part a natural reaction from the bare and cold intellectualism of Protestantism, such as occurs when one of the fundamental needs of the spiritual life is neglected through the over-development of other needs. Or it may be suggested that an enriched worship is a release from the tensions and the weariness of a machine regime.

Nevertheless, when the emotions are cultivated as ends in themselves and without relevance to the vital issues and values of social living, the modern psychologist is at least led to inquire whether we have not here a now well-recognized pattern of escape behavior. When we are incapable of facing the issue in a realistic way, we tend to take refuge in emotionalism.

As for the ameliorative *busy-ness* of unreconstructed religion, it may be urged that in spite of traditional beliefs and practices, many religious persons are sincerely seeking in more or less conscious ways to take hold of the problems of modern life in practical ways and to effect what changes they can. But restless and excessive activity that does not bear evidence of consistent directive purpose or effective organization at least raises the suspicion that it is a compensation arising out of a dumb sense of inadequacy to meet realistically the underlying issues of contemporary culture.

So that one is led to suspect that we have here two aspects of one process. *Because* religion in its uncritical acquiescence in the *status quo* has to that extent lost its essential character *as religion*

it unconsciously seeks to escape from reality and to compensate for its incompetency by resorting to the elaboration of the institution by erecting buildings, by the development of liturgy, and by excessive busy-ness about the activities that are irrelevant to the fundamental issues of a machine age.

All of which is to say that religion in the present American scene may be gradually losing its critical, reconstructive, and prophetic function and may be clothing itself with the richly embroidered vestments of the temple priest.

The Adjustment That Religion Demands

Manifestly, what is needed in the present American scene is a positive, dynamic, and creative adjustment of a vital religion to the changing processes and structures of the modern social world. Nothing short of an adjustment that will come to grips with the vital issues of modern living at the points where human values are involved, will suffice.

This means that religion must develop techniques for *discovering the spiritual values in the processes of our contemporaneous civilization*. It needs to see in current experience a *process* which in itself is *creative*, within which values are in process of creation and realization. This generation of human beings cannot live solely by the values that have emerged from and supported the experience of the past. Society is not so much *sick* as it is *undergoing a process of self-realization*. These values need to be mined out of current experience as it moves creatively from its historic past to its unrealized future. This means appreciation as well as criticism and reconstruction. Religion will live, not by employing tech-

niques for recovering the values of the past, but by dealing creatively with the values that are resident in a current creative experience.

Religion needs also to develop techniques for expressing these values that are resident in current experience in symbols appropriate to that experience and not merely to copy the symbols of a past experience simply because they are ready to hand. This of course, does not at all mean that the values and symbols of a past experience are to be ignored or undervalued. Neither does it mean that the religious experience of the present is to dissociate itself from the priceless historical religious experience. It does mean that as religion in the past has found appropriate symbols for expressing the values that lived and moved within it, so our experience must yield its values to vital and meaningful modes of expression in terms *of* the spiritual values of the experience of our generation and not *in spite of it*.

Most of all, vital religion needs to discover techniques for subjecting our contemporary civilization—its science, its machines, its industry, and its democratic way of life—to criticism, evaluation, and reconstruction in terms of these spiritual values. This has always been and still is the function of prophetic religion. The field of its operation is within the relations and functions of social living—in the manifold and significant experiences of the Great Society where the fundamental values of human living are involved. The reconstruction which prophetic religion effects takes place at the points where religious persons and the corporate religious body function in the Great Society.

These techniques contemporaneous religion does not, for the most part, possess. It is at some such points as these that religion needs to focus its

attention in any adequate adjustment which it may make to our changing modern world. Moreover, unless religion succeeds in making these adjustments creatively to the changing conditions of our modern world it will lose its essential character as religion as well as its standing and influence as a factor to be reckoned with in the modern world.

The Discussion

In the discussion which followed the presentation, the question was raised as to the meaning of the present situation for the Disciples in the light of their traditions. It was suggested that one advantage which we have in making the adjustment to changing conditions is a traditional experimental attitude.

It was suggested that the periods of vital interest in the life of a local congregation are those in which some vital and immediate issue is before the congregation, as during the erection of a building. It was suggested that this might imply that if the local church were brought realistically to grips with vital issues in the community and the larger social life—with issues that have vital meaning for human life—astonishing results might happen. On the contrary, it was pointed out that most preaching is quite conventional, general, and abstract, and remote from the vital issues of current experience. Dealing with such vital issues might mean martyrdom for some ministers and for some churches. But this might mean the rediscovery of the dynamic and reconstructive power in religion.

The question was raised as to why many of the best business structures have adopted the Gothic type of architecture. Could it be the utility or the economy of the Gothic for very tall structures

on expensive land? Or is it more likely that there is a search for more aesthetic expression in a machine regime and that the Gothic is used because it is ready to hand? There are some ventures in an architecture whose symbols are conceived in terms of current experience.

It was suggested that perhaps in part the new interest in beautiful architecture and liturgy is due to the self-assertion of neglected interests and capacities during a long and quite exclusive emphasis upon the cold rationalism of Protestantism and upon the mechanical and impersonal elements of a machine regime.

It was suggested that the discussion had brought the group's thinking to the field of techniques. Ministers and laymen in local churches are feeling the need of techniques for making their programs effective in the concrete conditions which they face. Where can ministers get help for dealing realistically with their work as religious leaders, somewhat after the manner in which a group of farmers discuss techniques at the experiment station of a state university?

Soul Saving in the Light of Modern Psychology

By WAYNE A. R. LEYS*

I. What Are Souls?

LIBERAL Christianity has soft-pedaled soul saving. This loss—for it is a loss—must be attributed to many causes. Souls have always been mysterious. Consequently, sinners have sought to escape the disconcerting liberal message by enjoining preachers to stick to a vaguely understood and extremely formal type of soul salvation. In the second place, historical criticism of the New Testament reveals a salvation that is not particularly attractive to us. Furthermore, the church is sponsor of many enterprises today that seem much more important than the invitation at the close of services and shivery baptisms. But accentuating this shift of interest is the influence of experimental and clinical psychology.

Psychologists are unable to find any mysterious soul entity, somehow independent of the body, and capable of being saved eternally by certain rites, beliefs, or supernatural experiences. In disgust, some psychologists have asserted that there isn't a soul, and that it can't be saved. But science started with tedious tests of perception instead of the soul, simply because perception is easier to test and study. Those reactions, which common sense calls expressions of the soul, were too complicated for a young science to handle. Such

*Candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the department of philosophy of the University of Chicago.

progress has been made, however, in the last sixty years, that we are now ready to write the natural history of human nature (souls and all) as dispassionately as biologists write the natural history of bees and beavers and apes.

The early academic psychologists were greatly impressed by the extent of human actions motivated by organic needs. They tried to explain every reaction by reference to the "instincts." But it became increasingly evident that the nervous systems alone do not account for all the regularities in conduct. Hence, social psychologists concluded that this native equipment is conditioned not only by individual experience but also by social experience as it is preserved in our institutions and customs. Bernard, of Minnesota, suggests that we call these conditioning influences "environmental pressures." By trial and error, imitation and suggestion, by many educative experiences, our individual organisms become habituated to use tooth brushes instead of tooth picks, to walk instead of crawl or jump, to be loyal to government and family, etc. We also acquire our logic or problem-solving methods, which are brought into play by problematic situations. The great variety of logics or ways of thinking are receiving deserved attention today. Overstreet, White, and others have told the public how they rationalize their failures, how they project their difficulties, how they compensate for their inferiorities, how substitute reactions are made, and so on. These are our social inheritance, our culture. They control our behavior from moment to moment.

Now the soul is one of these social controls. The soul, self, or personality is the status or role of an individual in his community. By virtue of their neural equipment children anticipate other

people's reactions to their own behavior. They learn to take the attitude of others toward themselves. They see themselves as others see them. We have all played papa and policeman and farmer and pet dog. We are now bullies, now timid; here receiving, there giving; sometimes leader, sometimes follower. Gradually the roles which do not fit us and which other people do not assign to us are eliminated, and we come to have a relatively stable self. We have our individual likes and dislikes, our idiosyncrasies, by which others know us and by which we know ourselves. This response to yourself controls a great deal of your behavior, especially when in doubt as to what should be done. It keeps you firm.

II. Perdition.

Is there any sense in declaring a soul lost or in hell? Yes, a soul is lost whenever a human organism goes to pieces. It is in danger whenever it fails to control and coordinate conduct. Conduct disintegrates into chaotic emotion in situations for which our society has not prepared us adequately with habits, skills, sentiments, and soul.

Many of the insane believe that they are dead or in hell. This is only one of the bizarre reactions of those unfortunates who have lost their souls, that is, whose behavior is no longer controlled by the self of their normal associations. Abnormal psychology shows that the soul or self may fail and break down in any sphere of life. I have in mind a restaurant owner who suffered a series of economic reverses. His restaurant-keeper, head-of-the-household self was not prepared for so long a series of disasters, and he lapsed into idle speculation. Wholly unfit for a solution of his real problems, he gave himself to a reconciliation of God and Satan. He was

the cosmic peace-maker, a role suggested many years before by an occult book but inhibited by his dominant self as irrelevant and unbecoming to his personality or role in the community. Under similar circumstances others commit suicide, become violent and hostile, mute, etc.

Another example of how economic pressures may destroy the soul is found in an Austrian immigrant. This man was a university graduate, and in his European community had been a man of fine sentiments and culture. In this country he lost contact with the society to which he was accustomed and plunged into business. He was successful financially, but he records: "I forgot for some years that birds sing, flowers have odors, stars shine. I did not think of what I liked or disliked, but of what was advantageous or disadvantageous." He had lost his old-world self, and was poorer for it.

Sex maladjustments cause more individuals to lose their souls than any other single factor, if the asylum proportions are representative. There are the sexual offenders who worry themselves to the point of insanity because the offense creates a conflict between their conduct and the standards which the self of their early training demands. Then there are the victims of unfortunate love experiences. An Armenian mission worker changed from an industrious, religious man to a bitter, sensitive paranoiac when his wife was unfaithful.

Poor health, bereavement, unusual parent-child relations, even noise and commotion can "send a man to hell." The cases are lost souls. Their perdition is immediate and tangible, and results not from the failure to accept some verbal creed, but from the failure of their social resources to meet the problems and tasks of life.

III. Salvation.

The soul saving program of Christian churches has consisted of a variety of more or less primitive techniques for regenerating the childhood self or building a new self capable of reintegrating behavior in conformity to the conventions of the Christian group. The Christian soul in the middle ages stands out clearly as a member of the ideal Christian community, obedient to the vice-regent on earth and journeying on to heaven, where it would be perfectly adapted to the idyllic life there. That soul repressed the flesh, was long suffering, conventional, and capable of saving the individual from severe conflicts within and without. To put it epigrammatically, instead of men saving their souls, their souls saved them.

First, the church can convert those unfortunate human beings who for some reason are unable to participate agreeably in constructive social life. The criminal elements of our population are members of the underworld. They belong to gangs and unholy communities in which their normal role is to prey upon lawful enterprise. Their actions are controlled by an anti-social soul, which will sooner or later bring them to naught. Thrasher quotes a young gangster who recounts his gang's depredations, stealing and destroying property. "We would always tear things down," the boy concluded. "That would make us laugh and feel good, to have so many jokes." In his gang a boy was living up to his reputation, doing his duty, and being himself when he was a vandal. Now there are families and boys' gangs where the growing youngster is controlled by a law-abiding self, and is guided into much happier activities. Boys' workers convert such children, individually and by gangs, to these lovelier so-

cieties. What is true of boys' gangs is true of racketeers' alliances, plundering political cliques, the councils of war lords and industrial kings, whose sins are better disguised but more devastating. They must be converted into citizens of the upperworld.

Conversion describes rather well what must happen to the great mass of maladjusted people. Children are unable to find a happy place in many families. Adolescents in breaking old home ties and forming new ones experience great difficulty in securing recognition on a satisfactory basis. The church must help them in their search for something to do and be in the transition years from childhood to maturity. Maladjusted husbands and wives, folks who are vegetating because they don't belong to stimulating communities, the vocationally unfit, the hobo—these require conversion. In America the immigrant commands the church's services in his adaptation to Western civilization. Read Park and Miller's *Old World Traits Transplanted*. One of the aliens there described laments that his breast "had heaved as a 'learned man' among his kindred." Now he was in the new world, forced to peddle jewelry and notions, unrecognized, and sleeping with greasy peddlers. Country people who migrate to the cities have the same frustration that aliens encounter. The asylums are full of victims drawn from all of these predicaments.

The church must assist in saving souls under such circumstances. Preaching and church schools help by the imparting of much needed information. Incorporation in the fellowship of the church helps. Personal work is probably the most effective. The pastor can direct these maladjusted people to clinics and to vocational opportunities.

He can tell them where they may secure the services of specialists. After some rather sad experience, the general opinion of expert church leaders is that the church should not attempt to bring a psychiatric clinic under its own roof, any more than it should itself become a hospital, law court, or public school. But it can put men and women in touch with these agencies, and support them when they need additional financial and moral support.

Second, the church can save souls by improving the morale of family, school, and factory. Not infrequently, institutions offer plenty of opportunities for fruitful participation on the part of their members, but the members are indifferent, half-hearted, or positively discontented, because the leaders do not challenge their best efforts and keep them interested. Morale also breaks down at certain periods of crisis. This is true of families just before the birth of a child, and of stores in rush seasons. Recreation in play and worship often saves the soul that would go to pieces without encouragement or relaxation.

Most churches have attended to the need for conversion and increased morale. They have often been uncritical. Preachers, for example, effect conversions from indolent selves to industrious selves, when the conversion must take place in an unjust industrial community that cannot offer abundant living to its industrious members. Sometimes a sense of guilt is magnified in those already too much inhibited by fear. At other times fear is denounced and courage demanded of people who are already spend-thrifts, speed-demons, and maniacs, and who really need more caution. It is evident that to keep public services discriminate is very difficult.

This leads to the third function of the church in the salvation of souls. A good many homes, schools, shops, and clubs are so defective that they cannot hope to incorporate all men fruitfully on their present basis. Periodic unemployment, angry strikes, bankruptcies, attest the imperfection of economic institutions, and their inability to give their members desirable roles or functions. Politics is so determined in evil ways that reformers easily lose their ideals when put in office, and it is commonly remarked that an honest man cannot be a good politician. Many rural communities are so poor that children born in them have not one chance in a trillion of ever using their capacities for the more skilled professions. If the church is to save souls worth saving it will have to do something to keep societies from stagnating in their present inadequate practices, as India's caste system did.

Two avenues of approach toward the mythical kingdom of God open to the daring:

First, human society is actually a constellation of societies. They all have their faults, but they also have their virtues. The church can stimulate and direct their interaction so that they exchange their virtues and not their vices. This is accomplished in many places by just bringing doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, clerks, and housewives together in the friendly contact of a social and educational program. Occasionally a congregation conducts a social experiment like that of the White Plains Community church's evaluation of commercial products and the Denver M. E. church's labor school. In some towns cooperation exists between church and public school. Now and then we hear of courses in home-making. This attack on the problem of making commu-

nities grow rests on social pluralism. The fact that human communities are many instead of one was really discovered only a generation ago by the political scientists, Gierke and Maitland. To-day the Guild Socialists and philosophical realists are showing that the old Hegelian belief in an all absorbing State was mistaken and leads to a self-sufficient stagnation; whereas, if the many communities and blocs of our time are properly guided, their interaction, even their competition, will remould them on a higher plane.

Second, you may be surprised by my second suggestion for the creation of institutions capable of giving men saving souls. It is mysticism. I mean not the grand mysticism of freakish ascetics, or a pietistic, theological mysticism, but the directed, controlled mysticism of trained minds. Whenever a problem seems insoluble and later is solved, there is an element of emotional behavior in which old habit systems dissolve and we gain a new point of view. Time is too short to go into an analysis of so-called creative thought, but, as Professor Mead and others point out, geniuses have always acted on some obscure suggestion which the majority of men neglect. They are geniuses because in the emotional reorganization of their thinking they light upon ideas that solve the hitherto insoluble, as did the prophets' ethical interpretation of holiness, and Hamilton's solution of the mathematical problem of quaternions.

The church can foster the birth of these soul saving discoveries by stimulating emotional experience. As Emerson said, people don't trust their inmost thoughts. It is part of religion's work to train children particularly to communicate their hunches and inspirations, so that their fellows may criticize them sympathetically, and use them to transform society if they are good.

IV. Conclusion.

The soul or self is a tool for organizing life, as Dewey puts it. It is the role we play in the drama of our community. It helps us behave consistently. Yet the majority of humankind have souls that cannot coordinate their careers happily. The church can help men win desirable souls by: (1) converting the maladjusted to communities offering a rich and abundant life; (2) building up the morale of these societies; and (3) prodding imperfect institutions to expansion and improvement, through interaction with one another and through cultivating inspired creative activity. Psychology enlightens soul-saving by making it specific. No souls are saved forever by any panacea. All souls are periodically in danger of perdition, and must be as often rescued. Some souls should be lost, and others won.

The church has no exclusive right on souls. It is not their sole manufacturer. But it *helps* in the manufacture of souls, and its part is to gear up the social machinery when that machinery is inadequate. Salvation is an art, based on a science.