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RELIGIOUS BASIS OF THE FORMS OF INDIAN SOCIETY, New York, 1946.

FIGURES OF SPEECH OR FIGURES OF THOUGHT? London, 1946.

See also Bibliographies in *Ars Islamica* IX, 1942, and *Psychiatry* VIII, 1945.

Am I My Brother's Keeper?

By ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

With an Introduction by Robert Allerton Parker

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INTRODUCTION

DR. COOMARASWAMY has been living and writing in the United States for the past thirty years, but the fruits of his mature thought have never before been made easily accessible to the intelligent layman. To remedy this lack, we have collected these representative essays, which throw so searching a light upon the problems of the present crisis of the human race. To certain readers, Coomaraswamy's ideas may seem highly controversial and destructive of commonly accepted assumptions. Such antagonists may object that this indictment of modern Western civilization is based upon obstinate age-old Oriental prejudices. But Ananda Coomaraswamy is not merely "an eminent Orientalist" (as Aldous Huxley characterizes him in *The Perennial Philosophy*); nor is he merely an authority on Oriental art. The ideas he formulates in these essays and reviews are expressed with the authority of a lifetime of scholarship. He writes, as he has elsewhere explained, "from a strictly orthodox point of view . . . endeavoring to speak with mathematical precision, but never employing words of our own, or making any affirmations for which authority could not be cited by chapter and verse; in this way making even our technique characteristically Indian."

Since Dr. Coomaraswamy deprecates personality and personalism, and condemns the contemporary mania for exhibitionary self-exploitation, he is the most reticent of men in furnishing biographical details. Yet, for lay readers, such details, and an outline of his crowded career, seem necessary for an understanding of the broad foundations of his thought. It may

come as a surprise, for instance, to know that his mother was English; that he began his career as a geologist—a petrologist; that he holds a degree as a Doctor of Science from the University of London; and that though he is without doubt the most distinguished exponent of the *Philosophia Perennis* in the English-speaking world, he is by no means the advocate of the vague, synthetic "theosophy" vulgarized in our Western world, nor of that theory of "reincarnation"—meaning the return of deceased individuals to rebirth on this earth—which is popularly and erroneously associated in certain circles with Hindu "philosophy." In the hope of clearing the air of such prejudices and misconceptions, I have collected the following biographical details:

Ananda Kentish Coomaswamy was born on August 22, 1877, in Colombo, Ceylon, the son of a distinguished Ceylonese gentleman, Sir Mutu Coomaswamy, the first Hindu to have been called to the bar in London, and author of the first translation into English of a Pali Buddhist text. Sir Mutu died before his son was two years old, and the child was brought up in England by his British mother (who survived until 1942).

Ananda Coomaswamy did not return to his native land until nearly a quarter of a century later. He was educated first at Wycliffe College, at Stonehouse in Gloucestershire, and later at the University of London. Although, without doubt, the Ceylonese youth felt the all-pervading influences of John Ruskin and William Morris, in the awakening nineties, his deeper interests were focused upon science—in particular upon geology and mineralogy. At twenty-two he contributed a paper on "Ceylon Rocks and Graphite" to the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*; and at twenty-five he was appointed director of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon. A few years later his work on the geology of Ceylon won him the degree of Doctor of Science from the University of London.

Life in Ceylon opened his eyes to the withering blight cast upon her native arts and crafts by the invasion of Occidental industrialism. Courageously and unequivocally the young Coomaswamy became the champion of those "native" cultures and handicrafts which were threatened with extermination by the "proselytizing fury" of Occidental civilization.

Since 1917 Coomaswamy has been with the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, as a research fellow in Oriental art, building up its unsurpassed department of Indian art; collecting, interpreting, expounding to museum curators the traditional philosophy of life and the function of art in human society; demonstrating that all significant expressions, whether in the crafts or in games and other "play," are varying dialects and symbolic activities of one language of the spirit.

Coomaswamy has been labeled as an expert in Oriental art: but his "Orientalism" has nothing in common with the pseudo-occultism and syncretic theosophy that are volatilized by the self-appointed prophets of the "cults." He likes to puncture the stereotyped fallacy of the "mysterious" and "mystifying" East, and has asserted that a faithful account of Hinduism might be attained by a categorical denial of most of the statements (e.g. about "reincarnation") that have been made about it not only by European scholars, but even by Indians trained in the contemporary skeptical and evolutionary habits of thinking.

His pen is an instrument of precision. His closely and tightly woven fabric of thought is the very model of explicit denotation—a virtue of written expression that is nowadays being rediscovered. For this scholar the exegesis of ancient texts is above all else a scientific pursuit, considered as means to a more abundant life. He prides himself upon never introducing phrases of his own and never makes any claims for which he cannot cite chapter and verse. His compact, condensed prose often pre-

sents a forbidding mosaic on the printed page, offering nothing in the way of enticement to slothful contemporary eyes, but challenging attention nonetheless because of its rigorous exactitude, like that of a mathematical demonstration. Not infrequently matter that would suffice for a whole article is compressed into a footnote. But even when he is thus writing for scholars, it is certainly not only for scholars; and when expressly for those who are not scholars, he can, as the essays in the present collection show, write very simply, relegating footnotes to concluding pages where the reader can ignore them if he so desires.

In the unfolding of this "myriad-minded" intellect—from geology to archaeology and thence to all the arts and expressions, from the humblest to the highest aspirations of all mankind—one is tempted to find a parallel to Leonardo's universal interests.

Beginning, as we have seen, with geology and mineralogy, Coomaraswamy's researches have become universal and all-embracing, ranging from philology in a dozen languages to music and iconography, and from the most ancient metaphysics to the most contemporary problems in politics, sociology, and anthropology. As an admirer has recently stated: "Never has he had time for, nor interest in, presenting personal ideas or novel theories, so constantly and so tirelessly has he devoted his energies to the rediscovery of the truth and the relating of the principles by which cultures rise and fall." Nor does he ever compromise or pull his punches in stating these truths as he has discovered them.

This courage is especially manifest in Coomaraswamy's essays devoted to art. He is today our most eloquent defender of the traditional philosophy of art—the doctrine exemplified in the artifacts that have come down to us from the Middle Ages and the Orient. This philosophy Coomaraswamy has in-

terpreted many times and with a wealth of explicit references; and in contrast he has pointed out the pathological aspects of our contemporary aesthetes who collect the exotic and the primitive with the greediness of the magpie snatching up bits of colored ribbon with which to "decorate" its nest! The arts of the great timeless tradition move ever from within outward, and are never concerned merely with the idealization of objective fact. Modern art, on the other hand, has no resource or end beyond itself; it is too "fine" to be applied, and too "significant" to mean anything precisely.

For Coomaraswamy, as spokesman of tradition, "disinterested aesthetic contemplation" is a contradiction in terms, and nonsense. The purpose of art has always been, and still should be, effective communication. But what, ask the critics, can works of art communicate? "Let us tell the painful truth," Coomaraswamy retorts, "that most of these works are about God, whom nowadays we never mention in polite society!" One is reminded of the fact that our modern treatises on ukiyoye rarely mention the *hetaerae* upon whose lives the great part of this art centers. Youthful anthropologists, like Deacon or Tom Harnisson, retracing the continuous-line sand drawings on a lonely beach of the New Hebrides, re-enacting the *dromenon* of the last survivors of a forgotten culture, in this process of feeling-with, may come closer toward understanding alien races, to the heart of true art, than does the most ecstatic and hysterical of Picassolaters in a Fifty-seventh Street gallery. For, to understand and to appreciate the art of any people, one must become united with it in spirit; one must have learned to feel and to understand the cosmos as they have felt and understood it—never approaching them with condescension or contempt, or even with the sort of "objectivity" that, while it may succeed in depicting, always fails to interpret their works and days.

This is not the place to enlarge upon these arresting and challenging ideas. If we are "off the beam" today in our "appreciation of art," as Coomaraswamy diagnoses our current ailment, it may be, as he asserts, because we are living through "one of the two most conspicuous ages of human decadence"—that first being the late classical. Narcissistic exhibitionism and magic aestheticism—with its greedy acquisition of the irrelevant—are but twin symptoms of our cultural schizophrenia. The manufacture of "art" in studios, coupled with the artless manufacture of the things that are made in factories, represents for him a reduction of the standard of living to subhuman levels. The coincidence of beauty and utility, significance and aptitude, must determine all human values. Artifacts serving such values are possible only in a co-operative society of free and responsible craftsmen—a vocational society in which men are free to be concerned with the good of the work to be done, and individually responsible for its quality. Coomaraswamy's ideas on art may be studied in *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* and *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* (London: Luzac & Co., 1943, 1946).

Now this traditional philosophy of art is integrated with the whole traditional philosophy of human society, or in other words, and as the readers of the following essays will learn, with the concept of a kingdom of God on earth. Coomaraswamy's work is a monumental achievement in integration: he has become the foremost exponent of the *Philosophia Perennis*, of St. Augustine's "wisdom uncreate, the same now that it ever was, and the same to be forevermore." Across far continents and over centuries and millennia of recorded and unrecorded time, this doctrine speaks in varying dialects, but with a single voice. It is the *sanātana dharma*, the *bagia sophia*, the "justice" or "righteousness" of the tradition, unanimous and universal. All of Coomaraswamy's "myriad-minded" concentra-

tion, together with an almost fabulous self-discipline and positive "drive," have been yoked together to demonstrate the single voice of human aspiration. It is we, the contemporaries, with our genius for fission and division, who are lost—*nous sommes les égarés!* "We are at war with ourselves," as Coomaraswamy insists at the end of his compact essay on René Guénon, "and therefore at war with one another. Western man is unbalanced, and the question, Can he recover himself? is a very real one."

Coomaraswamy's essay on Guénon, included in this book, may be studied as a model of his precision, accuracy, and mathematical brevity. Within the space of a few pages, we are presented with a complete and accurate guide to the intellectual career of one of the most arresting and most significant of contemporary thinkers. This introduction to Guénon is worth the price of admission; for the author of *The Reign of Quantity*, of *East and West*, and *The Crisis of the Modern World* seems to have been, for the American public at least, one of the casualties of the war. It is reassuring to know that the *Études Traditionnelles*, the monthly periodical which for many years had been the vehicle of Guénon's expression, has now resumed publication. And *Le règne de la quantité* has appeared in book form in Paris.

I can only hope that the present volume may open the door, to some readers at least, to a whole "new" realm of thought, as did my belated discovery of Coomaraswamy some years ago. Even his footnotes contain more provocative reading and point the way to more explorations and discoveries than one can ever find in any of the standard-brand, ready-made, ready-to-wear opinions proffered in many noisily advertised best sellers.

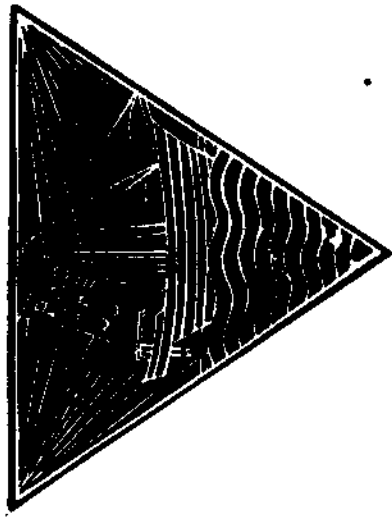
Robert Allerton Parker.

New York
March, 1946.

I: Am I My Brother's Keeper?

CAIN, who killed his brother Abel, the herdsman, and built himself a city, prefigures modern civilization, one that has been described from within as "a murderous machine, with no conscience and no ideals,"¹ "neither human nor normal nor Christian,"² and in fact "an anomaly, not to say a monstrosity."³ It has been said: "The values of life are slowly ebbing. There remains the show of civilization, without any of its realities."⁴ Criticisms such as these could be cited without end. Modern civilization, by its divorce from any principle, can be likened to a headless corpse of which the last motions are convulsive and insignificant. It is not, however, of suicide, but of murder that we propose to speak.

The modern traveler—"thy name is legion"—proposing to visit some "lost paradise" such as Bali, often asks whether or not it has yet been "spoiled." It makes a naïve, and even tragic, confession. For this man does not reflect that he is condemning himself; that what his question asks is whether or not the sources of equilibrium and grace in the other civilizations have yet been poisoned by contact with men like himself and the culture of which he is a product. "The Balinese," as Covarrubias says, "have lived well under a self-sufficient cooperative system, the foundation of which is reciprocal assistance, with money used only as a secondary commodity. Being extremely limited in means to obtain the cash—scarcer every day—to pay taxes and satisfy new needs, it is to be feared that the gradual breaking down of their institutions, together with the drain on their national wealth, will make coolies, thieves, beggars and prosti-



"Progress," by Eric Gill

tures of the proud and honorable Balinese of this generation, and will, in the long run, bring a social and moral catastrophe. . . . It would be futile to recommend measures to prevent the relentless march of Westernization; tourists cannot be kept out, the needs of trade will not be restricted for sentimental [or moral] reasons, and missionary societies are often powerful."⁵

Sir George Watt in 1912 wrote that "however much Indian art may be injured, or individuals suffer, progression in line with the manufacturing enterprise of civilization must be allowed free course."⁶ In the same year Gandhi said that "India is being ground down, not under the English heel, but under that of modern civilization." In an open letter to Gilbert Murray, the late Rabindranath Tagore said, "There is no people in the whole of Asia which does not look upon Europe with fear and suspicion."⁷ When I said to a working woman that what the Germans were doing in Belgium was very dreadful, she retorted, "Yes, too bad the Belgians should be treated as if they were Congo Negroes."

Modern civilization takes it for granted that people are better off the more things they want and are able to get; its values are quantitative and material. Here, How much is he worth? means How much money has he got? A speaker at Boston College lately described modern Western civilization as a "curse to humanity"; and those who now recognize its reflection in the Japanese mirror are evidently of the same opinion. Nevertheless Henry A. Wallace, then vice-president, in a well-meant speech, promised that when the war should be over, "Older [!] nations will have the privilege to help younger nations get started on the path to industrialization. . . . As their masses learn to read and write, and as they become productive mechanics, their standard of living will double and treble."⁸ He did not speak of the price to be paid, or reflect that an incessant

"progress," never ending in contentment, means the condemnation of all men to a state of irremediable poverty. In the words of St. Gregory Nazazien,

Could you from all the world all wealth procure,
More would remain, whose lack would leave you poor!

As for reading and writing, we shall only say that the association of these with "productive mechanics" (and the "chain belt" that suggests the "chain gang") is significant, since these arts are only of paramount importance to the masses in a quantitative culture, where one must be able to read both warnings and advertisements if one is to earn money safely and "raise one's standard of living": that if reading and writing are to enable the Indian and Chinese masses to read what the Western proletariat reads, they will remain better off, from any cultural point of view, with their own more classical literature of which all have oral knowledge; and add that it is still true that, as Sir George Birdwood wrote in 1880, "Our education has destroyed their love of their own literature . . . their delight in their own arts and, worst of all, their repose in their own traditional and national religion. It has disgusted them with their own homes—their parents, their sisters, their very wives. It has brought discontent into every family so far as its baneful influences have reached."⁹

Systems of education should be extensions of the cultures of the peoples concerned; but of these the Western educator knows little and cares less. For example, O. L. Reiser assumed that, after the war, American ideals and policies, so far from allowing for other peoples' cultural self-determination, would dominate the world and that all divergent religions and philosophies could and should be discarded in favor of the "scientific humanism" which should now become "the religion of humanity."¹⁰ We can only say that if Western races are in the future to do

anything for the peoples whose cultures have been broken down in the interests of commerce and "religion," they must begin by renouncing what has been aptly called their "proselytizing fury"—"hypocrites, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte."¹¹

It is overlooked that while many Asiatic peoples, for reasons sufficiently obvious, are inadequately provided with the necessities of life, this is by no means true of all Asiatic peoples. In any case it is overlooked that it is a basic Asiatic conception that, given the necessities of life, it is a fallacy to suppose that the further we can go beyond that the better. Where the European seeks to become economically independent in old age, the Indian map of life proposes for old age an independence of economics. The "guinea pigs" of a well-known book, in other words you and I, whose wants are perpetually exacerbated by the sight and sound of advertisements (it has been recognized that "Whole industries are pooling their strength to ram home a higher standard of living"¹²), have been compared by an Indian writer¹³ to another animal—"the donkey before which the driver has dangled a much coveted carrot hanging from a stick fastened to its own harness. The more the animal runs to get at the carrot, the further is the cart drawn"; i.e. the higher the dividends paid. We are the donkey, the manufacturer the driver, and this situation pleases us so well that we, in the kindness of our hearts, would like to make donkeys also of the Balinese—at the same time that we ask, "Have they been spoiled yet?" "Spoiled" means "degraded"; but the word has also another sinister meaning, that of "plundered," and there are ways of life as well as material goods of which one can be robbed.

Let us make it clear that if we approach the problem of inter-

cultural relationships largely on the ground of *art*, it is not with the special modern and aesthetic or sentimental concept of art in mind, but from that Platonic and once universally human point of view in which "art" is the principle of manufacture and nothing but the science of the making of any things whatever for man's good use, physical and metaphysical; and in which, accordingly, agriculture and cookery, weaving and fishing are just as much arts as painting and music. However strange this may appear to us, let us remember that we cannot pretend to think for others unless we can think *with* them. In these contexts, then, "art" involves the whole of the active life, and presupposes the contemplative. The disintegration of a people's art is the destruction of their life, by which they are reduced to the proletarian status of hewers of wood and drawers of water, in the interests of a foreign trader, whose is the *profit*. The employment of Malays on rubber estates, for example, in no way contributes to their culture and certainly cannot have made them our friends: they owe us nothing. We are irresponsible, in a way that Orientals are not yet, for the most part, irresponsible.

Let me illustrate what I mean by responsibility. I have known Indians who indignantly refused to buy shares in a profitable hotel company, because they would not make money out of hospitality, and an Indian woman who refused to buy a washing machine, because then, "What would become of the washerman's livelihood?" For an equal sense of responsibility in a European I can cite the infinite pains that Marco Pallis took, in selecting gifts for his Tibetan friends, not to choose anything that might tend toward a destruction of the *quality* of their standard of living.

The modern world has, in fact (as was recently remarked by Aldous Huxley), abandoned the concept of "right livelihood," according to which a man could not be considered a Christian in

good standing if he made his living by usury or speculation, or considered a Buddhist if he made his living by the manufacture of weapons or of intoxicating drinks. And as I have said elsewhere, if there are any occupations that are not consistent with human dignity, or manufactures however profitable that are not of real *goods*, such occupations and manufactures must be abandoned by any society that has in view the dignity of all its members. It is only when measured in terms of dignity and not merely in terms of comfort that a "standard of living" can properly be called "high."

The bases of modern civilization are to such a degree rotten to the core that it has been forgotten even by the learned that man ever attempted to live otherwise than by bread alone. It had been assumed by Plato that "it is contrary to the nature of the arts to seek the good of anything but their object,"¹⁴ and by St. Thomas Aquinas that "the craftsman is *naturally* inclined by justice to do his work faithfully."¹⁵ To what a level industrialism must have lowered the workman's sense of honor and natural will to do a "good job" if, in a reference to the mechanics and groundmen who make and service airplanes, Gilbert Murray could propound that it is "a quite wonderful fact that masses of men have been made so trustworthy and reliable" and could say that "it is the Age of Machines that, for the first time in history, has made them so."¹⁶ That was a part of his apology for Western civilization, in an open letter to Rabindranath Tagore. All that this cock and bull airplane story really means, of course, is that where production is really for *use*, and not mainly or only for profit, the workman is *still* "naturally inclined to do his work faithfully." Even today, as Mrs. Handy has remarked, "Technical perfection remains the ideal of the Marquesas Island craftsman."¹⁷ In Europe, the instinct of workmanship has not been extinguished in human

nature, but only suppressed in human beings working irresponsibly.

Anthropologists, as impartial observers who do not attempt to consider the arts *in vacuo*, but in their relation to the whole structure of society, mince no words in their description of the effects of Western contacts on traditional cultures. Mrs. Handy's record of the Marquesas Islanders, that "the external aspects of their culture have been almost wiped out by the white man's devastating activities,"¹⁷ is typical of what could be cited from a hundred other sources. Of the "savages" of New Guinea Raymond Firth says that "their art as an expression of complex social values is of basic importance," but that under European influence "in nearly every case the quality of their art has begun to fall off."¹⁸ C. F. Iklé writes that due to the influence of the Western world "which is so ready to flood the remainder of our globe with inferior mass products, thus destroying among native peoples the concepts of quality and beauty, together with the joy of creation . . . it is a question whether the beautiful art of Ikat weaving can long survive in the Dutch East Indies."¹⁹

It is true that we have learned to appreciate the "primitive arts"; but only when we have "collected" them. We "preserve" folk songs, at the same time that our way of life destroys the singer. We are proud of our museums, where we display the damning evidence of a way of living that we have made impossible. These museum "treasures" were originally the everyday productions of live men; but now, "due to the breakdown of culture in the islands where the objects were made, they may be studied more satisfactorily in museums," while at their source these "highly developed and beautiful techniques have died, or are dying."²⁰ "Dying," because in the words of the knighted fatalist, "progression in line with the manufactur-

ing enterprise of modern civilization must be allowed free course"! To which we can only rejoin that, if it *must* be that offenses come, "Woe unto them through whom they come." What, indeed, has lately happened to the cities that Cain built? Let us not assume that "it can't happen here."

Our "love of art" and "appreciation" of primitive art, as we call whatever art is abstract and impersonal, rather than self-expressive or exhibitionist, has not aroused in our hearts any love for the primitive artist himself. A more loveless, and at the same time more sentimentally cynical, culture than that of modern Europe and America it would be impossible to imagine. "Seeing through," as it supposes, everything, it cares for nothing but itself. The passionless reason of its "objective" scholarship, applied to the study of "what men have believed," is only a sort of frivolity, in which the real problem, that of knowing what should be believed, is evaded. Values are to such an extent inverted that action, properly means to an end, has been made an end in itself, and contemplation, prerequisite to action, has come to be disparaged as an "escape" from the responsibilities of activity.

In the present essay we are concerned, not with the political or economic, but with the cultural relations that have actually subsisted, and on the other hand should subsist, as between the peoples who call themselves progressive and those whom they call backward, a type of nomenclature that belongs to the genus of "the lion painted by himself." Not that we overlook the sinister relationships that connect your cultural activities abroad with your political and economic interests, but that there is the imminent danger that even when you have made up your minds to establish political and economic relations with others on a basis of justice, you will still believe that you have been entrusted with a "civilizing mission." There is more than political and economic interest behind the proselytizing fury:

behind all this there is a fanaticism that cannot away with any sort of wisdom that is not of its own date and kind and the product of its own pragmatic calculations; "there is a rancor," as Hermes Trismegistus said, "that is contemptuous of immortality, and will not let us recognize what is divine in us."²¹

That is why the export of your "education" is even more nefarious than your traffic in arms. What was attempted by the English in India when they proposed to build up a class of persons "Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (Lord Macaulay) is just what Middletown, substituting "American" for "English," would like to do today. It is what the British tried to do in Ireland where "in thirty years Irish was killed off so rapidly that the whole island contained fewer speakers in 1891 than the small province of Connaught alone did thirty years before. . . . The amount of horrible suffering entailed by this policy . . . counted for nothing with the Board of National Education, compared with their great object of . . . the attainment of one Anglified uniformity. . . . The children are taught, if nothing else, to be ashamed of their own parents, ashamed of their own nationality, ashamed of their own names."²² Everyone will recognize the pattern, repeated alike in the case of the "English-educated" Indian and in that of the American Indian who has been subjected to the untaught ignorance of public school teachers who cannot speak his mother tongue.

Such are the fruits of "civilization," and the fruit betrays the tree. All that can only be atoned for by repentance, recantation, and restitution. Of these, the last is a virtual impossibility; the fallen redwood cannot be replanted. A traditional culture still, however, survives precariously in "unspoiled" oases, and the least that we can say to the modern world is this: Whatever else you dispense in "wars of pacification" or by way of "peace-

ful penetration," be good enough to reserve your "college education" and your "finishing schools" for home consumption. What you call your "civilizing mission" is in our eyes nothing but a form of megalomania. Whatever we need to learn from you, we shall come to ask you for as the need is felt. At the same time, if you choose to visit us, you will be welcome guests, and if there is anything of ours that you admire, we shall say, "It is yours."

For the rest, it is much more for its own sake than in order to make restitution that the modern world must "change its mind" (repent); for, as *Philosophia* said to *Boethius* in his distress, "You have forgotten who you are." But how can this "reasoning and mortal animal," this extroverted mentality, be awakened, reminded of itself, and converted from its sentimentality and its sole reliance on estimative knowledge to the life of the intellect? How can this world be given back its meaning? Not, of course, by a return to the outward forms of the Middle Ages nor, on the other hand, by assimilation to any surviving, Oriental or other, pattern of life. But why not by a recognition of the principles on which the patterns were based? These principles, on which the "unspoiled" life of the East is still supported, must at least be grasped, respected, and understood if ever the Western provincial is to become a citizen of the world. Even the goodness of the modern world is unprincipled; its "altruism" is no longer founded on a knowledge of the Self of all beings and therefore in the love of Self, but only on selfish inclination. And what of those who are not inclined to be unselfish; is there any intellectual standard by which they can be blamed?

If ever the gulf between East and West, of which we are made continually more aware as physical intimacies are forced upon us, is to be bridged, it will be only by an agreement on principles, and not by any participation in common forms of

government or methods of manufacture and distribution. It is not, as *Kierkegaard* said, new forms of government, but another Socrates that the world needs. A philosophy identical with Plato's is still a living force in the East. We called the modern world a headless body; in the Eastern books there is a teaching, how to put heads on bodies again. It is one of sacrifice and of preoccupation with realities; outwardly a rite and inwardly a being born again.

To propose an agreement on principles does not involve or imply that the Western world should be Orientalized; propaganda is out of the question as between gentlemen, and everyone must make use of the forms appropriate to his own psycho-physical constitution. It is the European that wants to practice Yoga; the Oriental points out that he has already contemplative disciplines of his own. What is implied is that a recognition of the principles by which the East still lives, and which can, therefore, be seen in operation (and few will question that peoples as yet "unspoiled" are happier than those that have been "spoiled"), could lead the modern "world of impoverished reality," in which it is maintained that "such knowledge as is not empirical is meaningless," back to the philosopher who denied the dependence of knowledge on sensation and maintained that all learning is recollection.

They cannot help us who, in the words of Plato, "think that nothing is, except what they can grasp firmly with their hands." I repeat what I have said elsewhere, that "the European, for his own sake and all men's sake in a future world, must not only cease to harm and exploit the other peoples of the world, but must also give up the cherished and flattering belief that he can do them any good otherwise than by being good himself." I am far from believing that the European is incapable of goodness.

In conclusion, let me say that the few European workers in the Eastern field to whom my criticisms do not apply will be the

last to disagree with them. Also, that what I have been saying is not what you will hear from the already English-educated and too often "spoiled" Orientals with whom you are able to converse.^{2a} I am speaking for a majority, literate and illiterate, that is not vocal, partly by inclination, and partly because, in more than one sense, they do not speak your language. I am speaking for those who once before "bowed low before the West in patient, deep disdain," and are not less a power today because you cannot know or hear them.

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- ² Eric Gill, *Autobiography* (New York, 1942), p. 174.
- ³ René Guénon, *East and West* (London, 1941), p. 43.
- ⁴ A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), p. 358.
- ⁵ M. Covarrubias, *Island of Bali* (1942). Cf. Colin McPhee, "Ank-loeng Gamelans in Bali," *Djawa*, Nos. 5 and 6, 17de Jaargang (September-December, 1937), p. 348: "The last five years, what with the changing tempo of life, the benefits of education, have seen the most rapid changes of all, the most irresponsible patching together of heterogeneous elements in music and drama. One wonders what will survive in ten years of what was once an art." Before we can talk wisely about co-operation it must first of all be realized that, as the editor of the *New English Weekly* recently remarked, "practically the whole of Oriental humanity, the greater portion of the human race, including the U.S.S.R., lives in a social aspiration which is the polar opposite of the American." Any possibilities of co-operation are bound up with agreement about ends, whereas almost every proposal nowadays brought forward has only to do with means, and usually with the application of Western means to Eastern situations.
- ⁶ Sir George Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi* (London, 1912), p. 72. This is the modern form of the Amaurian (Amalrician) heresy; the economically determined man, without free will, is by the same token irresponsible; no blame to him, the fault is fate's! Cf. Sir George Birdwood, *Siva*, pp. 84-5: "England . . . where every national

interest is sacrificed to the shibboleth of unrestricted international competition; and where as a consequence, agriculture, the only sure foundation of society, languishes . . . its last result, the bitter, stark and cruel contrast presented between the West End of London and the East. And do Europe and America desire to reduce all Asia to an East End?" And K. E. Barlow (in *Purpose*, XI, 1939, p. 245): "In our everyday world the principle of exploitation without responsibility has brought a disorder in society and in Nature which stupefies all of us who think. . . . It has become clear that our civilisation is pursuing a course which cannot long be maintained."

⁷ Rabindranath Tagore and Gilbert Murray, *Open Letters, East and West* (Paris, 1932), p. 44.

⁸ Henry A. Wallace, then vice-president, in a speech, 1943. And as the late President Roosevelt truly said, "Never again must we in the United States isolate ourselves from the rest of humanity"; but he showed by his next words, "I am confident that the foreign trade of the United States can be trebled after the war—providing millions more jobs," that he had not in mind the root of the matter, that is, an abandonment of America's *cultural* isolation. As for the "price" of industrialism, it must be recognized, in the first place, that the American "standard of living," judged by qualitative standards, is beneath contempt, at the same time that the artist, no longer a member of society but a parasite upon it, "has become the pekinese of the rich" (Erich Meissner's phrase in *Germany in Peril*, 1942, p. 42). "The standardised products of our mills and factories are a disgrace to American civilisation" (Mgr. G. B. O'Toole in Foreword to Krzesinski, *Is Modern Culture Doomed?* 1942). On the salesman's and producer's side: "Modern machinery and its irresistible advance fills these men with mystic frenzy" (Meissner, *ibid.*, p. 115); and, "Eventually Man . . . adopts a discipline which transforms him into a machine himself" (Ernst Niekisch, quoted by Meissner, *ibid.*). Vice-President Wallace's words and two current, and very revealing, American advertisements are a dramatic demonstration. Of the advertisements, one, depicting a salesman behind his counter, puts into his mouth the words: "Handmade? Of course not! Why, most everything in this store is made by machines nowadays. If it weren't I wouldn't be selling half these things, and you couldn't buy them. They'd cost too much." The other prints a "poem," called "My Machine," and its first lines are:

There are many other machines, but this one is mine.

It is a part of me, I am a part of it.

We are one.

It does not stop—unless I forget.

There is no reference to the quality, either of man or of product, in either case.

"On peut remarquer que la machine est, en un certain sens, le contraire de l'outil, et non point un 'outil perfectionné' comme beaucoup se l'imaginent, car l'outil est en quelque sorte un 'prolongement' de l'homme lui-même, tandis que la machine réduit celui-ci à n'être plus que son serviteur ['minder']; et, si l'on a pu dire que 'l'outil engendra le métier', il n'est pas moins vrai que la machine le tue; les réactions instinctives des artisans contre les premières machines s'expliquent par là d'elle-mêmes" (René Guénon, *Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps*, 2nd ed.; Paris, 1945, p. 64, note). In Ruskin's words, "The great cry that rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this,—that we manufacture everything there except men" (*Stones of Venice*, in Ruskin's works, Vol. X, p. 196); and, "This evil cannot be cured through higher wages, good housing conditions and improved nutrition" (Meissner, *ibid.*, p. 42). "If your real ideals are those of materialistic efficiency, then the sooner you know your own mind, and face the consequences, the better. . . . The more highly industrialised a country, the more easily a materialistic philosophy will flourish in it, and the more deadly that philosophy will be. . . . And the tendency of unlimited industrialism is to create masses of men and women—detached from tradition, alienated from religion, and susceptible to mass suggestion: in other words, a mob. And a mob will be no less a mob if it is well fed, well clothed, well housed, and well disciplined" (T. S. Eliot in *The Idea of a Christian Society*).

"It is doubtful whether life can be significantly lived without conscious relation to some tradition. Those who do live without it live as a kind of moral proletariat, without roots and without loyalties. For to be significant life needs form, and form is the outcome of a quality of thought and feeling which shapes a tradition" (Dorothy M. Emmet in *The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking*, 1946, p. 163).

More than a physical well-being is necessary for felicity. An Indian peasant's face has neither the vacancy of the grinning apes and

whores that are the ideal of the American advertiser, nor the expression of anxiety that marks the American "common man" in real life. "In spite of our enormous technological advances we are spiritually, and as humane beings, not the equals of the average Australian aboriginal or the average Eskimo—we are very definitely their inferior" (M. F. Ashley Montagu, "Socio-Biology of Man," *Scientific Monthly*, June, 1942, p. 49).

⁹ Sir John Birdwood, *Industrial Arts of India* (1880).

¹⁰ O. L. Reiser, *A New Earth and a New Humanity* (New York, 1942), p. 209.

¹¹ Matthew 23:15.

¹² "It is open to question whether anything a machine turns out for direct human use is productive of human good" (in the *Nation*, November 27, 1943). Cf. L. Ziegler in *Forum Philosophicum* I, 87, 88: "Every ware which does not answer an existing need is above all the most superfluous thing in the world. . . . it must first artificially rouse up a need in places where a need does not exist. . . . Present day economic management is framed for the stimulation, yes, even for the 'creation' of needs. . . . as if wages and income could in any way keep pace with this artificially aroused need for a commodity. . . . The fashionably altering display of goods attaches to so unlimited a mass and variety of wares a label of necessity, that in the face of it even the purchasing power of the rich is beaten, whereas the poor seem doomed to a poverty hitherto undreamt of. From this point of view modern finance reveals itself as the enemy of society, yes, even as the destroyer of society." For, observe that, as Albert Schweitzer says, "Whenever the timber trade is good, permanent famine reigns in the Ogowe region." Modern wars, in fact, are fought for world markets; in other words, in order that all "backward" peoples may be forced to purchase an annual quota of gadgets from those who call themselves "advanced."

Here it is, however, with the moral effects of manufacture for profit that we are concerned, and especially with its effect on those who are forced on the one hand to provide the raw materials, and on the other to buy the manufactured gadgets. It is not merely that the change from a barter to a money economy is actually "from an economy of abundance to one of scarcity" (Parsons, *Pueblo Indian Religion*, 1939, p. 1144), but that it is a matter of the poisoning of the lives of contented peoples, whose culture is destroyed to satisfy the

saurian greed of the plutocratic "democracies." In the Balkans, for example, "There were two sorts of people. There was the people as it had been since the beginning of time, working in the villages, small towns and capitals. But there was also a new people, begotten by the new towns which the industrial and financial development of the nineteenth century had raised all over Europe. . . . This new sort of people [was one that] had been defrauded of their racial tradition, they enjoyed no inheritance of wisdom; brought up without gardens, to work on machines, all but a few lacked the education which is given by craftsmanshup; and they needed this wisdom and this education as never before, because they were living in conditions of unprecedented frustration and insecurity" (Rebecca West, in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*).

"The rise of science, the discrediting of religion, and the abiding triumph of capitalism have focussed the basic personality of Western man upon one goal, success, the only proof of which is the endless acquisition of money. . . . But this kind of training, as it emphasizes striving for self-esteem and success, releases at the same time the extraordinary aggressiveness which takes so many cruel forms. Aggressiveness turned inward results in masochism, feelings of inferiority, passivity, and other kinds of weakness. Turned outward, the result is sadism, extreme rivalry, envy, and conflict, the social climax being war. Competition, which motivates the entire psychological formation, is not in itself evil, since it may create a strong and self-reliant human being; but in a scarcity economy such as ours the combination of the social system with a basic personality focussed on competition for success overburdens the lives of most human beings with tensions and insecurities for which only one term is adequate—lifelong neuroticism" (Delmore Schwartz, reviewing Abram Kardiner, *The Individual and His Society* and *The Psychological Frontiers of Society*, 1939 and 1945, in *The Nation*, Jan. 12, 1946, pp. 46-48).

There can be no possible doubt that what men now understand by "civilization" is an essentially vicious and destructive force, or that what is called "progress" is both suicidal and murderous. "Civilization, as we now have it, can only end in disaster" (G. H. Estabrooks, *Man the Mechanical Misfit*, New York, 1941, p. 246); or as C. H. Grattan and G. R. Leighton so well say, "No one looking for peace and quiet has any business talking about international trade" (in

Harper's Magazine, August, 1944). Of all these things the catastrophes of today are only a beginning.

¹³ J. C. Kumarappa. Cf. Philo Judaeus, *De specialibus legibus* IV, 80 f.

¹⁴ *Republic*, 342 B, 347 A, etc.

¹⁵ *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 57, 3 and 2. *Justitia* here = δικαιοσύνη = *dharma*, here as in Plato, *Republic*, 433 A, and in Matthew 6:33, where the word is rendered by "righteousness," with some loss of force.

¹⁶ *Open Letters, East and West*.

¹⁷ *Art des Îles Marquises* (1938). Cf. the words of two reviewers of J. F. Embree's *Suye Mura, a Japanese Village*: One remarks that here "we see a little group of Japanese families living, working, struggling in their daily life to earn their bread, to educate their children, and to live out lives of ordinary usefulness, in the way common to people everywhere"; the other that "his book offers good evidence that it will take many a long year to Westernize the Japanese peasant." The more "long years" the better for the peace and happiness of the Japanese peasants and of the world!

Contrast also the words of H. N. Brailsford, "The caste line will have to be broken, if industrial work is to be provided for the superfluous cultivators," with those of the sociologist S. Chandrasekhar, who points out that "the development of cotton textile-mill industry in India, which today employs about 430,000 workers, has actually been responsible for throwing out of employment an estimated total of 6 million handloom workers, who have been forced to fall back upon an already overcrowded agrarian economy"; and consider whether Gandhi's cult of the spinning wheel is not a more practical and realistic way of dealing with India's poverty than Mr. Brailsford's.

¹⁸ *Art and Life in New Guinea* (1936), pp. 31, 32. Cf. Tom Harri-
son, *Savage Civilisation, passim*.

¹⁹ *Robin and Needle Club* (New York, 1931), XV, p. 56.

²⁰ G. A. Reichard, *Melanesian Design* (1931), pp. 1, 90.

A Ceylonese correspondent recently asked me: "If God appeared on earth, and inquired for the Aztecs, Incas, Red Indians, Australian aborigines, and other slowly disappearing races, would the civilized nations take him to your great museum?"

²¹ Asclepius 1.12 b (Scott, *Hermetica*, I,309).

²² Douglas Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland* (1899), pp. 630-44.

²³ For example, Professor F. S. C. Northrop in his *Meeting of East and West*, 1946, p. 434, quotes the "cultivated humanist" Jawaharlal Nehru to prove that "the younger Indians and other Orientals" are anxious to learn "what the West has to teach of science and its applications," which is true enough, but hardly to the point in a book intended to show that Eastern and Western ideologies are unlike; he overlooks Shri Bharata Kumarappa, who says that "we must be clear in our minds as to what exactly we want to work for—mere material prosperity or human development," and complains that among socialists "the question of whether an abundance of goods is necessary for human well-being is never so much as raised."

II: The Bugbear of Literacy

IT WAS possible for Aristotle,¹ starting from the premise that a man, being actually cultured, may *also* become literate, to ask whether there is a necessary or merely an accidental connection of literacy with culture. Such a question can hardly arise for us, to whom illiteracy implies, as a matter of course, ignorance, backwardness, unfitness for self-government: for us, unlettered peoples are uncivilized peoples, and vice versa—as a recent publisher's blurb expresses it: "The greatest force in civilization is the collective wisdom of a literate people."

There are reasons for this point of view; they inhere in the distinction of a people, or folk, from a proletariat, that of a social organism from a human ant heap. For a proletariat, literacy is a practical and cultural necessity. We may remark in passing that necessities are not always goods in themselves, out of their context; some, like wooden legs, are advantageous only to men already maimed. However that may be, it remains that literacy is a necessity *for us*, and from both points of view; (1) because our industrial system can only be operated and profits can only be made by men provided with at least an elementary knowledge of the "three R's"; and (2) because, where there is no longer any necessary connection between one's "skill" (now a timesaving "economy of motion" rather than a control of the product) and one's "wisdom," the possibility of culture depends so much on our ability to read the best books. We say "possibility" here because, whereas the literacy actually produced by compulsory mass education often involves little or no more than an ability and the will to read the newspapers

and advertisements, an actually cultured man under these conditions will be one who has studied many books in many languages, and this is not a kind of knowledge that can be handed out to everyone under "compulsion" (even if *any* nation could afford the needed quantity and quality of teachers) or that could be acquired by everyone, however ambitious.

We have allowed that in industrial societies, where it is assumed that man is made for commerce and where men are cultured, if at all, in spite of rather than because of their environment, literacy is a necessary skill. It will naturally follow that *if*, on the principle that misery loves company, we are planning to industrialize the rest of the world, we are also in duty bound to train it in Basic English, or words to that effect—American is already a language of exclusively external relationships, a tradesman's tongue—lest the other peoples should be unable to compete effectively with us. Competition is the life of trade, and gangsters must have rivals.

In the present article we are concerned with something else, viz., the assumption that, even for societies not yet industrialized, literacy is "an unqualified good and an indispensable condition of culture."² The vast majority of the world's population is still unindustrialized and unlettered, and there are peoples still "unspoiled" (in the interior of Borneo): but the average American who knows of no other way of living than his own, judges that "unlettered" means "uncultured," *as if* this majority consisted only of a depressed class in the context of his own environment. It is because of this, as well as for some meaner reasons, not unrelated to "imperial" interests, that when we propose not merely to exploit but also to educate "the lesser breeds without the [i.e. *our*] law" we inflict upon them profound, and often lethal, injuries. We say "lethal" rather than "fatal" here because it is precisely a destruction of their *memories* that is involved. We overlook that "education" is never

creative, but a two-edged weapon, always destructive; whether of ignorance or of knowledge depending upon the educator's wisdom or folly. Too often fools rush in where angels might fear to tread.

As against the complacent prejudice we shall essay to show (1) that there is no necessary connection of literacy with culture, and (2) that to impose our literacy (and our contemporary "literature") upon a cultured but illiterate people is to destroy their culture in the name of our own. For the sake of brevity we shall assume without argument that "culture" implies an ideal quality and a good form that can be realized by all men irrespective of condition: and, since we are treating of culture chiefly as expressed in words, we shall identify culture with "poetry"; not having in view the kind of poetry that nowadays babbles of green fields or that merely reflects social behavior or our private reactions to passing events, but with reference to that whole class of prophetic literature that includes the Bible, the Vedas, the Edda, the great epics, and in general the world's "best books," and the most philosophical if we agree with Plato that "wonder is the beginning of philosophy." Of these "books" many existed long before they were written down, many have never been written down, and others have been or will be lost.

We shall have now to make some quotations from the works of men whose "culture" cannot be called in question; for while the merely literate are often very proud of their literacy, such as it is, it is only by men who are "not only literate but also cultured" that it has been widely recognized that "letters" at their best are only a means to an end and never an end in themselves, or, indeed, that "the letter kills." A "literary" man, if ever there was one, the late Professor G. L. Kittredge writes:³ "It requires a combined effort of the reason and the imagination to conceive a poet as a person who cannot write, singing or re-

citing his verses to an audience that cannot read. . . . The ability of oral tradition to transmit great masses of verse for hundreds of years is proved and admitted. . . . To this oral literature, as the French call it, education is no friend. Culture destroys it, sometimes with amazing rapidity. *When a nation begins to read . . . what was once the possession of the folk as a whole, becomes the heritage of the illiterate only, and soon, unless it is gathered up by the antiquary, vanishes altogether.*" Mark, too, that this oral literature once belonged "to the whole people . . . the community whose intellectual interests are the same from the top of the social structure to the bottom," while in the reading society it is accessible only to antiquaries, and is no longer bound up with everyday life. A point of further importance is this: that the traditional oral literatures interested not only all *classes*, but also all *ages* of the population; while the books that are nowadays written expressly "for children" are such as no mature mind could tolerate; it is now only the comic strips that appeal alike to children who have been given nothing better and at the same time to "adults" who have never grown up.

It is in just the same way that music is thrown away; folk songs are lost to the people at the same time that they are collected and "put in a bag"; and in the same way that the "preservation" of a people's art in folk museums is a funeral rite, for preservatives are only necessary when the patient has already died. Nor must we suppose that "community singing" can take the place of folk song; its level can be no higher than that of the Basic English in which our undergraduates must be similarly drilled, if they are to understand even the language of their elementary textbooks.

In other words, "Universal compulsory education, of the type introduced at the end of the last century, has not fulfilled expectations by producing happier and more effective citizens; on

the contrary, it has created readers of the yellow press and cinema-goers" (Karl Otten). A master who can himself not only read, but also *write* good classical Latin and Greek, remarks that "there is no doubt of the quantitative increase in literacy of a kind, and amid the general satisfaction that something is being multiplied it escapes enquiry whether the something is profit or deficit." He is discussing only the "worst effects" of enforced literacy, and concludes: "Learning and wisdom have often been divided; perhaps the clearest result of modern literacy has been to maintain and enlarge the gulf."²

Douglas Hyde remarks that "in vain have disinterested visitors opened wide eyes of astonishment at schoolmasters who knew no Irish being appointed to teach pupils who knew no English. . . . Intelligent children endowed with a vocabulary in every day use of about three thousand words enter the Schools of the Chief Commissioner, to come out at the end with their natural vivacity gone, their intelligence almost completely sapped, their splendid command of their native language lost forever, and a vocabulary of five or six hundred English words, badly pronounced and barbarously employed, substituted for it. . . . Story, lay, poem, song, aphorism, proverb, and the unique stock in trade of an Irish speaker's mind, is gone forever, and replaced by *nothing*. . . . The children are taught, if nothing else, to be ashamed of their own parents, ashamed of their own nationality, ashamed of their own names. . . . It is a remarkable system of 'education' "⁴—this system that you, "civilized and literate" Americans, have inflicted upon your own Amerindians, and that all imperial races are still inflicting upon their subjected peoples, and would like to impose upon their allies—the Chinese, for example.

The problem involved is both of languages and what is said in them. As for language, let us bear in mind, in the first place, that no such thing as a "primitive language," in the sense of

one having a limited vocabulary fitted only to express the simplest external relationships, is known. Much rather, that is a condition to which, under certain circumstances and as the result of "nothing-morist" philosophies, languages tend, rather than one from which they originate; for example, 90 per cent of our American "literacy" is a two-syllabled affair.⁵

In the seventeenth century Robert Knox said of the Sinhalese that "their ordinary Plow-men and Husbandmen do speak elegantly, and are full of complement. And there is no difference of ability and speech of a Country-man and a Courtier."⁶ Abundant testimony to the like effect could be cited from all over the world. Thus of Gaelic, J. F. Campbell wrote, "I am inclined to think that dialect the best which is spoken by the most illiterate in the islands . . . men with clear heads and wonderful memories, generally very poor and old, living in remote corners of remote islands, and speaking only Gaelic,"⁷ and he quotes Hector Maclean, who says that the loss of their oral literature is due "partly to reading . . . partly to bigoted religious ideas, and partly to narrow utilitarian views"—which are, precisely, the three typical forms in which modern civilization impresses itself upon the older cultures. Alexander Carmichael says that "the people of Lews, like the people of the Highlands and Islands generally, carry the Scriptures in their minds and apply them in their speech. . . . Perhaps no people had a fuller ritual of song and story, of secular rite and religious ceremony . . . than the ill-understood and so-called illiterate Highlanders of Scotland."⁸

St. Barbe Baker tells us that in Central Africa "my trusted friend and companion was an old man who could not read or write, though well versed in stories of the past. . . . The old chiefs listened enthralled. . . . Under the present system of education there is grave risk that much of this may be lost."⁹ W. G. Archer points out that "unlike the English system in which

one could pass one's life without coming into contact with poetry, the Uraon tribal system uses poetry as a vital appendix to dancing, marriages and the cultivation of a crop—functions in which all Uraons join as a part of their tribal life," adding that "if we have to single out the factor which caused the decline of English village culture, we should have to say it was literacy."¹⁰ In an older England, as Prior and Gardner remind us, "even the ignorant and unlettered man could read the meaning of sculptures that now only trained archeologists can interpret."¹¹

The anthropologist Paul Radin points out that "the distortion in our whole psychic life and in our whole apprehension of the external realities produced by the invention of the alphabet, the whole tendency of which has been to elevate thought and thinking to the rank of the exclusive proof of all verities, never occurred among primitive peoples," adding that "it must be explicitly recognized that in temperament and in capacity for logical and symbolical thought, there is no difference between civilized and primitive man," and as to "progress," that none in ethnology will ever be achieved "until scholars rid themselves, once and for all, of the curious notion that everything possesses an evolutionary history; until they realize that certain ideas and certain concepts are as ultimate for man"¹² as his physical constitution. "The distinction of peoples in a state of nature from civilized peoples can no longer be maintained."¹³

We have so far considered only the dicta of literary men. A really "savage" situation and point of view are recorded by Tom Harrisson, from the New Hebrides, "The children are educated by listening and watching. . . . Without writing, memory is perfect, tradition exact. The growing child is taught all that is known. . . . Intangible things cooperate in every effort of making, from conception to canoe-building. . . . Songs are a form of story-telling. . . . The lay-out and content in the thousand

myths which every child learns (often word perfect, and one story may last for hours) are a whole library . . . the hearers are held in a web of spun words"; they converse together "with that accuracy and pattern of beauty in words that we have lost." And what do they think of us? "The natives easily learn to write after white impact. They regard it as a curious and useless performance. They say: 'Cannot a man remember and speak?'"¹⁴ They consider us "mad," and may be right.

When we set out to "educate" the South Sea Islanders it is generally in order to make them more useful to ourselves (this was admittedly the beginning of "English education" in India), or to "convert" them to our way of thinking; not having in view to introduce them to Plato. But if we or they should happen upon Plato, it might startle both to find that their protest, "Cannot a man remember?" is also his.¹⁵ "For," he says, "this invention [of letters] will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not exercise their memory. Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them. You have invented an elixir *not of memory, but of reminding*; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without teaching, and will therefore seem to know many things [Professor E. K. Rand's "more and more of less and less"], when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are not wise but only wiseacres." He goes on to say that there is another kind of "word," of higher origin and greater power than the written (or as we should say, the printed) word; and maintains that the wise man, "*when in earnest, will not write in ink*" dead words that cannot teach the truth effectively, but will sow the seeds of wisdom in souls that are able to receive them and so "to pass them on forever."

There is nothing strange or peculiar in Plato's point of view;

it is one, for example, with which every cultured Indian unaffected by modern European influences would agree wholly. It will suffice to cite that great scholar of Indian languages, Sir George A. Grierson, who says that "the ancient Indian system by which literature is recorded not on paper but on the memory, and carried down from generation to generation of teachers and pupils, is still [1920] in complete survival in Kashmir. Such fleshly tables of the heart are often more trustworthy than birch bark or paper manuscripts. The reciters, even when learned Pandits, take every care to deliver the messages word for word," and records taken down from professional storytellers are thus "in some respects more valuable than any written manuscript."¹⁶

From the Indian point of view a man can only be said to *know* what he knows *by heart*; what he must go to a book to be reminded of, he merely knows of. There are hundreds of thousands of Indians even now who daily repeat from knowledge by heart either the whole or some large part of the *Bhagavad Gītā*; others more learned can recite hundreds of thousands of verses of longer texts. It was from a traveling village singer in Kashmir that I first heard sung the Odes of the classical Persian poet, Jalālu'd-Dīn Rūmī. From the earliest times, Indians have thought of the learned man, not as one who has read much, but as one who has been profoundly taught. It is much rather from a master than from any book that wisdom can be learned.

We come now to the last part of our problem, which has to do with the characteristic preoccupations of the oral and the written literature; for although no hard and fast line can be drawn between them, there is a qualitative and thematic distinction, as between literatures that were originally oral and those that are created, so to speak, on paper—"In the beginning was the WORD." The distinction is largely of poetry from prose and myth from fact. The quality of oral literature is essen-

tially poetical, its content essentially mythical, and its preoccupation with the spiritual adventures of heroes: the quality of originally written literature is essentially prosaic, its content literal, and its preoccupation with secular events and with personalities. In saying "poetical" we mean to imply "mantic," and are naturally taking for granted that the "poetic" is a literary quality, and not merely a literary (versified) form. Contemporary poetry is essentially and inevitably of the same caliber as modern prose; both are equally opinionated, and the best in either embodies a few "happy thoughts" rather than any certainty. As a famous gloss expresses it, "Unbelief is for the mob." We who can call an art "significant," knowing not of what, are also proud to "progress," we know not whither.

Plato maintains that one who is *in earnest* will not write, but teach; and that if the wise man writes at all, it will be either only for amusement—mere "belles lettres"—or to provide reminders for himself when his memory is weakened by old age. We know exactly what Plato means by the words "in earnest"; it is not about human affairs or personalities, but about the eternal verities, the nature of real being, and the nourishment of our immortal part, that the wise man will be in earnest. Our mortal part can survive "by bread alone," but it is by the Myth that our Inner Man is fed; or, if we substitute for the true myths the propagandist myths of "race," "uplift," "progress," and "civilizing mission," the Inner Man starves. The written text, as Plato says, *can* serve those whose memories have been weakened by old age. Thus it is that in the senility of culture we have found it necessary to "preserve" the masterpieces of art in museums, and at the same time to record in writing and so also to "preserve" (if only for scholars) as much as can be "collected" of oral literatures that would otherwise be lost forever; and this must be done before it is *too late*.

All serious students of human societies are agreed that agri-

culture and handicraft are essential foundations of any civilization; the primary meaning of the word being that of making a home for oneself. But, as Albert Schweitzer says, "We proceed as if not agriculture and handicraft, but reading and writing were the beginning of civilization," and, "from schools which are mere copies of those of Europe they ["natives"] are turned out as 'educated' persons, that is, who think themselves superior to manual work, and want to follow only commercial or intellectual callings . . . those who go through the schools are mostly lost to agriculture and handicraft."¹⁷ As that great missionary, Charles Johnson of Zululand, also said, "the central idea [of the mission schools] was to prize individuals off the mass of the national life."

Our literary figures of thought, for example, the notions of "culture" (analogous to agriculture), "wisdom" (originally "skill"), and "asceticism" (originally "hard work"), are derived from the productive and constructive arts; for, as St. Bonaventura says, "There is nothing therein which does not bespeak a true wisdom, and it is for this reason that Holy Scripture very properly makes use of such similes."¹⁸ In normal societies, the necessary labors of production and construction are no mere "jobs," but also rites, and the poetry and music that are associated with them are a kind of liturgy. The "lesser mysteries" of the crafts are a natural preparation for the greater "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." But for us, who can no longer think in terms of Plato's divine "justice" of which the social aspect is vocational, that Christ was a carpenter and the son of a carpenter was only an historical accident; we read, but do not understand that where we speak of primary matter as "wood," we must also speak of Him "through whom all things were made" as a "carpenter." At the best, we interpret the classical figures of thought, not in their universality but as figures of speech invented by individual authors. Where literacy

becomes an only skill, "the collective wisdom of a literate people" may be only a collective ignorance—while "backward communities are the oral libraries of the world's ancient cultures."¹⁹

The purpose of our educational activities abroad is to assimilate our pupils to our ways of thinking and living. It is not easy for any foreign teacher to acknowledge Ruskin's truth, that there is one way only to help others, and that that is, not to train them in our way of living (however bigoted our faith in it may be), but to find out what they have been trying to do, and were doing before we came, and if possible help them to do it better. Some Jesuit missionaries in China are actually sent to remote villages and required to earn their living there by the practice of an indigenous craft for at least two years before they are allowed to teach at all. Some such condition as this ought to be imposed upon all foreign teachers, whether in mission or government schools. How dare we forget that we are dealing with peoples "whose intellectual interests are the same from the top of the social structure to the bottom," and for whom our unfortunate distinctions of religious from secular learning, fine from applied art, and significance from use have not yet been made? When we have introduced these distinctions and have divided an "educated" from a still "illiterate" class, it is to the latter that we must turn if we want to study the language, the poetry, and the whole culture of these peoples, "before it is too late."

In speaking of a "proselytizing fury" in a former article I had not only in view the activities of professed missionaries but more generally those of everyone bent by the weight of the white man's burden and anxious to confer the "blessings" of our civilization upon others. What lies below this fury, of which our punitive expeditions and "wars of pacification" are only more evident manifestations? It would not be too much to say

that our educational activities abroad (a word that must be taken to include the American Indian reservations) are motivated by an *intention* to destroy existing cultures. And that is not only, I think, because of our conviction of the absolute superiority of our *Kultur*, and consequent contempt and hatred for whatever else we have not understood (all those for whom the economic motive is not decisive), but grounded in an unconscious and deep-rooted envy of the serenity and leisure that we cannot help but recognize in people whom we call "unspoiled." It irks us that these others, who are neither, as we are, industrialized nor, as we are, "democratic," should nevertheless be *contented*; we feel bound to discontent them, and especially to discontent their women, who might learn from us to work in factories or to find careers. I used the word *Kultur* deliberately just now, because there is not much real difference between the Germans' will to enforce their culture upon the backward races of the rest of Europe and our determination to enforce our own upon the rest of the world; the methods employed in their case may be more evidently brutal, but the kind of will involved is the same.²⁰ As I implied above, that "misery loves company" is the true and unacknowledged basis of our will to create a brave new world of uniformly literate mechanics. This was recently repeated to a group of young American workmen, one of whom responded, "And *are* we miserable!"

But however we may be whistling in the dark when we pride ourselves upon "the collective wisdom of a literate people," regardless of what is read by the "literate," the primary concern of the present essay is not with the limitations and defects of modern Western education *in situ*, but with the spread of an education of this type elsewhere. Our real concern is with the fallacy involved in the attachment of an absolute value to literacy, and the very dangerous consequences that are involved in the setting up of "literacy" as a standard by which to measure

the cultures of unlettered peoples. Our blind faith in literacy not only obscures for us the significance of other skills, so that we care not under what subhuman conditions a man may have to learn his living, if only he can read, no matter what, in his hours of leisure; it is also one of the fundamental grounds of interracial prejudice and becomes a prime factor in the spiritual impoverishment of all the "backward" people whom we propose to "civilize."

REFERENCES

¹ *Metaphysics*, VI: 2, 4, and XI: 8, 12. "Reading, for a man devoid of prior-understanding, is like a blind man's looking in a mirror" (*Garuda Purāna*, XVI: 82).

² Walter Shewring, "Literacy," in the *Dictionary of World Literature*, 1943. "We are becoming culturally illiterate faster than all these agencies are managing to make us literate in the use of the potentialities of the culture" (Robert S. Lynd, in *Knowledge for What?*). Professor John U. Nef of Chicago, speaking at Hamline University in 1944, remarked: "In spite of the alleged great spread of literacy [in America] . . . the proportion of the population who can communicate with each other on a relatively high level of discourse is very much smaller than it was." A recent study sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching found that "the average senior in six colleges recognized only 67 out of 100 words in familiar use by educated people"! In view of all the facts, it is indeed astonishing to find Lord Raglan saying: "By savage I mean illiterate" (in the *Rationalist Annual*, 1946, p. 43). There was a time, indeed, when the English bourgeoisie thought of the Gaelic Highlanders as "savages"; but from an anthropologist one would expect a refutation of such "myths," rather than their revival!

³ F. G. Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Introduction by G. L. Kittredge. Cf. W. W. Comfort, *Chrétien de Troyes* (Everyman's Library), Introduction: Chrétien's poetry "was intended for a society that was still homogeneous, and to it at the outset doubtless all classes of the population listened with equal interest." Nothing of this kind is or can be achieved by the organized and compulsory education of today—"a province of its own, detached from life" with its

"atmosphere of intense boredom that damps the vitality of the young" and of which "the result is: the young people do not know anything really well," or as "it would be more exact to say, they do not know what knowledge is," which "explains the dangerous gullibility which propaganda exploits" (Erich Meissner, *Germany in Peril*, 1942, pp. 47, 48).

⁴ Douglas Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, 1903, p. 633.

⁵ American is already "a one-dimensional public language, a language oriented to the description of external aspects of behavior, weak in overtones . . . our words lack . . . the formal precision which comes from awareness of past and different usage" (Margaret Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry*, 1942, p. 82). Any author who uses words precisely is liable to be misunderstood.

"Perhaps at no other time have men been so knowing and yet so unaware, so burdened with purposes and so purposeless, so disillusioned and so completely the victims of illusion. This strange contradiction pervades our entire modern culture, our science and our philosophy, our literature and our art" (W. M. Urban, *The Intelligible World*, 1929, p. 172). Under such conditions, ability to read a printed page becomes a mere trick, and is no guarantee whatever of power to grasp or to communicate ideas.

⁶ Robert Knox, *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*, 1681 (1911 ed., p. 168).

⁷ J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1890 ed., pp. v, xxiii, cxxii).

⁸ Alexander Carmichael, *Carmine Gadelica*, Vol. I, 1900, pp. xxiii, xxix. Cf. J. G. Mackay, *More West Highland Tales*, 1940, General Preface: "The poorest classes generally speak the language admirably. . . . Some recited thousands of lines of ancient heroic poems. . . . Another cause of the fragmentary character of some tales is the obliterating effect of modern civilisation"; and J. Watson, *ibid.*, Introduction: "This intellectual inheritance . . . this ancient culture extended over all the north and northerly midlands of Scotland. The people who possessed this culture may have been, and usually were, unlettered. They were far from being uneducated. It is sad to think that its decay has been partly due to the schools and the Church!" It is, in fact, precisely by "the schools and the Church" that the decay of cultures all over the world has been hastened in the last hundred years.

H. J. Massingham in *This Plot of Earth* (1944, p. 233) tells of "the old man, Seonardh Coinbeul, who could neither read nor write and carried 4500 lines of his own bardic composition in his head, together with all manner of songs and stories."

A. Solonylsin in the *Asiatic Review* (NS. XLI, Jan., 1945, p. 86) remarks that the recording of the Kirghiz epic is still incomplete, although over 1,100,000 lines have already been taken down by the Kirghiz Research Institute—"Bards who recite the 'Manas'—or 'Manaschi'—have phenomenal memories in addition to poetic talent. Only this can explain the fact that hundreds of thousands of verses have been handed down orally." A writer reviewing *Manas, Kirghishti Narodni Epos* in the *Journal of American Folklore*, 58, 1945, p. 65, observes that "general education has already done much to remove the *raison d'être* of the minstrel's position in tribal life. . . . With acculturation becoming a rolling juggernaut it is not surprising that what remains of epic singing may soon degenerate into an artificial and ostentatiously national publicity device."

⁹ R. St. Barbe Baker, *Africa Drums*, 1942, p. 145.

¹⁰ W. G. Archer, *The Blue Grove*, 1940, Preface; and in JBORS, Vol. XXIX, p. 68.

¹¹ Edward Schröder Prior and Arthur Gardner, *An Account of Medieval Figure-Sculpture in England*, 1912, p. 25.

¹² Paul Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher*, 1927.

¹³ J. Strzygowski, *Spüren indogermanische Glaubens in der bildenden Kunst*, 1936, p. 344.

¹⁴ Tom Harrison, *Savage Civilisation*, 1937, pp. 45, 344, 351, 353.

¹⁵ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 275 f. Cf. H. Gauss, *Plato's Conception of Philosophy*, 1937, pp. 262-5.

¹⁶ Sir George A. Grierson, *Lallā Vākyaṇi*, 1920, p. 3.

¹⁷ Albert Schweitzer, *On the Edge of the Primal Forest*.

¹⁸ *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, 14.

¹⁹ N. K. Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*, 1942, Preface, further, "The experience of exclusively literate communities is too narrow."

"Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Timothy 3:7)!

²⁰ Modern "education" imposed upon traditional cultures (e.g. Gaelic, Indian, Polynesian, American Indian) is only less deliberately,

not less actually, destructive than the Nazi destruction of Polish libraries, which was intended to wipe out their racial memories; the Germans acted consciously, but we who Anglicize or Americanize or Frenchify are driven by a rancor that we do not recognize and could not confess. This rancor is, in fact, our reaction to a superiority that we resent and therefore would like to destroy.

that in all the schools and universities of the postwar world stress should be laid on the teaching of the basic principles of the great world religions as a means of promoting international understanding and developing a concept of world citizenship.

The question next arises, By whom can such teaching be properly given? It will be self-evident that no one can have understood, and so be qualified to teach, a religion, who is opposed to all religion; this will rule out the rationalist and scientific humanist, and ultimately all those whose conception of religion is not theological, but merely ethical. The obvious ideal would be for the great religions to be taught only by those who confess them; but this is an ideal that could only be realized, for the present, in our larger universities. It has been proposed to establish a school of this kind at Oxford.

As things are, a teaching about other than Christian faiths is mainly given in theological seminaries and missionary colleges by men who do believe that Christianity is the only true faith, who approve of foreign missions, and who wish to prepare the missionary for his work. Under these conditions, the study of comparative religion necessarily assumes a character quite different from that of other disciplines; it cannot but be biased. It is obvious that if we are to teach at all it should be our intention to communicate only truth: but where a teaching takes for granted that the subject matter to be dealt with is intrinsically of inferior significance, and the subject is taught, not *con amore*, but only to instruct the future schoolmaster in the problems that he will have to cope with, one cannot but suspect that at least a part of the truth will be suppressed, if not intentionally, at least unknowingly.

If comparative religion is to be taught as other sciences are taught, the teacher must surely have recognized that his own religion is only one of those that are to be "compared"; he may not expound any "pet theories" of his own, but is to present the

III: Paths That Lead to the Same Summit

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON COMPARATIVE RELIGION

"There is no Natural Religion. . . . As all men are alike (though infinitely various), so all Religions, as all similars, have one source";—William Blake

"There is but one salvation for all mankind, and that is the life of God in the soul."—William Law

THE constant increase of contacts between ourselves, who for the purposes of the present essay may be assumed to be Christians, and other peoples who belong to the great non-Christian majority has made it more than ever before an urgent necessity for us to understand the faiths by which they live. Such an understanding is at the same time intrinsically to be desired, and indispensable for the solution by agreement of the economic and political problems by which the peoples of the world are at present more divided than united. We cannot establish human relationships with other peoples if we are convinced of our own superiority or superior wisdom, and only want to convert them to our way of thinking. The modern Christian, who thinks of the world as his parish, is faced with the painful necessity of becoming himself a citizen of the world; he is invited to participate in a symposium and a *convivium*; not to preside—for there is Another who presides unseen—but as one of many guests.

It is no longer only for the professed missionary that a study of other religions than his own is required. This very essay, for example, is based upon an address given to a large group of schoolteachers in a series entitled "How to Teach about Other Peoples," sponsored by the New York School Board and the East and West Association. It has, too, been proposed

truth without bias, to the extent that it lies in his power. In other words, it will be "necessary to recognize that those institutions which are based on the same premises, let us say the super-natural, must be considered together, our own amongst the rest," whereas "today, whether it is a question of imperialism, or of race prejudice, or of a comparison between Christianity and paganism, we are still preoccupied with the uniqueness . . . of our own institutions and achievements, our own civilization."¹ One cannot but ask whether the Christian whose conviction is ineradicable that his is the only true faith can conscientiously permit himself to expound another religion, knowing that he cannot do so honestly.

We are, then, in proposing to teach about other peoples, faced with the problem of tolerance. The word is not a pretty one; to tolerate is to put up with, endure, or suffer the existence of what are or appear to be other ways of thinking than our own; and it is neither very pleasant merely "to put up with" our neighbors and fellow guests, nor very pleasant to feel that one's own deepest institutions and beliefs are being patiently "endured." Moreover, if the Western world is actually more tolerant today than it was some centuries ago, or has been since the fall of Rome, it is largely because men are no longer sure that there is any truth of which we can be certain, and are inclined to the "democratic" belief that one man's opinion is as good as another's, especially in the fields of politics, art, and religion. Tolerance, then, is a merely negative virtue, demanding no sacrifice of spiritual pride and involving no abrogation of our sense of superiority; it can be commended only in so far as it means that we shall refrain from hating or persecuting others who differ or seem to differ from ourselves in habit or belief. Tolerance still allows us to pity those who differ from ourselves, and are consequently to be pitied!

Tolerance, carried further, implies indifference, and becomes intolerable. Our proposal is not that we should tolerate heresies, but rather come to some agreement about the truth. Our proposition is that the proper objective of an education in comparative religion should be to enable the pupil to discuss with other believers the validity of particular doctrines,² leaving the problem of the truth or falsity, superiority or inferiority, of whole bodies of doctrine in abeyance until we have had at least an opportunity to know in what respects they really differ from one another, and whether in essentials or in accidentals. We take it for granted, of course, that they will inevitably differ accidentally, since "nothing can be known except in the mode of the knower." One must at least have been taught to recognize equivalent symbols, e.g., rose and lotus (Rosa Mundi and Padmāvati); that Soma is the "bread and water of life"; or that the Maker of all things is by no means accidentally, but necessarily a "carpenter" wherever the material of which the world is made is *hylic*. The proposed objective has this further and immediate advantage, that it is not in conflict with even the most rigid Christian orthodoxy; it has never been denied that some truths are embodied in the pagan beliefs, and even St. Thomas Aquinas was ready and willing to find in the works of the pagan philosophers "extrinsic and probable proofs" of the truths of Christianity. He was, indeed, acquainted only with the ancients and with the Jews and some Arabians; but there is no reason why the modern Christian, if his mental equipment is adequate, should not learn to recognize or be delighted to find in, let us say, Vedāntic, Sūfī, Taoist, or American Indian formulations extrinsic and probable proofs of the truth as he knows it. It is more than probable, indeed, that his contacts with other believers will be of very great advantage to the Christian student in his exegesis and understanding of Christian doctrine; for though himself a believer, this is in spite

of the nominalist intellectual environment in which he was born and bred, and by which he cannot but be to some degree affected; while the Oriental (to whom the miracles attributed to Christ present no problem) is still a realist, born and bred in a realistic environment, and is therefore in a position to approach Plato or St. John, Dante or Meister Eckhart more simply and directly than the Western scholar who cannot but have been affected to some extent by the doubts and difficulties that force themselves upon those whose education and environment have been for the greater part profane.

Such a procedure as we have suggested provides us immediately with a basis for a common understanding and for co-operation. What we have in view is an ultimate "reunion of the churches" in a far wider sense than that in which this expression is commonly employed: the substitution of active alliances—let us say of Christianity and Hinduism or Islam, on the basis of commonly recognized first principles, and with a view to an effective co-operation in the application of these principles to the contingent fields of art (manufacture) and prudence—for what is at present nothing better than a civil war between the members of one human family, children of one and the same God, "whom," as Philo said, "*with one accord* all Greeks and Barbarians acknowledge together."⁸ It is with reference to this statement that Professor Goodenough remarks that, "So far as I can see Philo was telling the simple truth about paganism as he saw it, not as Christian propaganda has ever since misrepresented it."

It need not be concealed that such alliances will necessarily involve an abandonment of all missionary enterprises such as they are now; interdenominational conferences will take the place of those proselytizing expeditions of which the only permanent result is the secularization and destruction of existing cultures and the pulling up of individuals by their roots. You

have already reached the point at which culture and religion, utility and meaning, have been divorced and can be considered apart, but this is not true of those peoples whom you propose to convert, whose religion and culture *are one and the same thing* and none of the functions of whose life are necessarily profane or unprincipled. If ever you should succeed in persuading the Hindus that their revealed scriptures are valid only "as literature," you will have reduced them to the level of your own college men who read the Bible, if at all, only as literature. Christianity in India, as Sister Nivedita (Patrick Geddes' distinguished pupil, and author of *The Web of Indian Life*) once remarked, "carries drunkenness in its wake"⁴—for if you teach a man that what he has thought right is wrong, he will be apt to think that what he has thought wrong is right.

We are all alike in need of repentance and conversion, a "change of mind" and a "turning round": not, however, from one *form* of belief to another, but from unbelief to belief. There can be no more vicious kind of tolerance than to approach another man, to tell him that "We are both serving the same God, you in your way and I in His!" The "compassing of sea and land to make one proselyte" can be carried on as an institution only for so long as our ignorance of other peoples' faiths persists. The subsidizing of educational or medical services accessory to the primary purpose of conversion is a form of simony and an infringement of the instruction, "Heal the sick . . . provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey . . . [but go] forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." Wherever you go, it must be not as masters or superiors but as guests, or as we might say nowadays, "exchange professors"; you must not return to betray the confidences of your hosts by any libel. Your vocation must be purged of any notion of a "civilizing mission"; for what you think of as "the white man's burden" here is a matter of "white shadows in

the South Seas" there. Your "Christian" civilization is ending in disaster—and you are bold enough to offer it to others! Realize that, as Professor Plumer has said, "the surest way to betray our Chinese allies is to sell, give or lend-lease them our [American] standard of living,"⁶ and that the hardest task you could undertake for the present and immediate future is to friend of mine, in correspondence, speaks of Śrī Rāmākrishna as convince the Orient that the civilization of Europe is in any sense a Christian civilization, or that there really are reasonable, just, and tolerable Europeans amongst the "barbarians" of whom the Orient lives in terror.

The word "heresy" means choice, the having opinions of one's own, and thinking what we *like* to think: we can only grasp its real meaning today, when "thinking for oneself" is so highly recommended (with the proviso that the thinking must be "100 per cent"), if we realize that the modern equivalent of heresy is "treason." The one outstanding, and perhaps the only, real heresy of modern Christianity in the eyes of other believers is its claim to exclusive truth; for this is treason against Him who "never left himself without a witness," and can only be paralleled by Peter's denial of Christ; and whoever says to his pagan friends that "the light that is in you is darkness," in offending these is offending the Father of lights. In view of St. Ambrose's well-known gloss on I Corinthians 12:3, "all that is true, *by whomsoever it has been said*, is from the Holy Ghost" (a dictum endorsed by St. Thomas Aquinas), you may be asked, "On what grounds do you propose to distinguish between your own 'revealed' religion and our 'natural' religion, for which, in fact, we also claim a supernatural origin?" You may find this question hard to answer.

The claim to an exclusive validity is by no means calculated to make for the survival of Christianity in a world prepared to prove all things. On the contrary, it may weaken enormously

its prestige in relation to other traditions in which a very different attitude prevails, and which are under no necessity of engaging in any polemic. As a great German theologian has said, "human culture [*Menschheitsbildung*] is a unitary whole, and its separate cultures are the dialects of one and the same language of the spirit."⁶ The quarrel of Christianity with other religions seems to an Oriental as much a tactical error in the conflict of ideal with sensate motivations as it would have been for the Allies to turn against the Chinese on the battle-field. Nor will he participate in such a quarrel; much rather he will say, what I have often said to Christian friends, "Even if you are not on our side, we are on yours." The converse attitude is rarely expressed; but twice in my life I have met a Roman Catholic who could freely admit that for a Hindu to become a professing Christian was not essential to salvation. Yet, could we believe it, the Truth or Justice with which we are all alike and unconditionally concerned is like the Round Table to which "al the worlde crysten and hethen repayren" to eat of one and the same bread and drink the same wine, and at which "all are equal, the high and the low." A very learned Roman Catholic friend of mine, in correspondence, speaks of Śrī Rāmākrishna as "another Christ . . . Christ's own self."

Let us now, for a moment, consider the points of view that have been expressed by the ancients and other non-Christians when they speak of religions other than their own. We have already quoted Philo. Plutarch, first with bitter irony disposing of the Greek euhemerists "who spread atheism all over the world by obliterating the Gods of our belief and turning them all alike into the names of generals, admirals and kings," and of the Greeks who could no longer distinguish Apollo (the intelligible Sun) from Helios (the sensible sun), goes on to say: "Nor do we speak of the 'different Gods' of different peoples, or of the

