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A HISTORIAN OF RELIGION TRIES TO DEFINE RELIGION

by Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough

A paper on love, loyalty, or justice would gain little but pedantry by starting out with a concise definition of the term. Only as we describe the various conflicting elements associated with such words could we finally arrive at a resultant meaning within their complexities. In important matters we understand not as we simplify but as we can tolerate and include. Each important aspect of our lives overlaps every other. Even an apparently distinct feature like childhood runs into our maturity, so that no adult can be understood apart from the child still living in him. A colleague of mine told me he had once tried to define poetry in such a way that his formula would include all the kinds of literature to which the word had been applied. When he had finished, he said, his definition had become so broad that no one had any use for it. I strongly suspect, however, that in making so universal a definition he had come to an understanding of poetry much richer and deeper, even if less clear and specific, than that of those with more limited statements. For clarity is often won at the expense of depth of understanding.

The late Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough presented this paper at the opening of the 1964 Star Island Conference of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science asking: What is Religion? He was professor of religion at Yale University from 1923 to 1962 and is noted for his twelve-volume work *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period.* He died March 20, 1965. We publish this paper in accordance with his prior wish and with the consent of Mrs. Goodenough.

Religion presents an outstanding example of this difficulty. Those who think they know most clearly, for approval or disapproval, what religion "is" seem to recognize least what amazingly different aspects of life the term has legitimately indicated. We can, therefore, best approach religion by getting in mind the various experiences that men have called religion, rather than what we think ideally should be given the name.

A man is commonly considered religious or not according as he assents to, belongs to, follows the practices of an organized religious faith. When we speak of the religions of the world we are ordinarily taken to refer to Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and the like. "Primitive religions," those traditionally practiced in the Pacific Islands and central Africa or by the Australian aborigines, seem to most people to be rather incipient, nascent religions than religions in any acceptable sense. In lectures on religion such phenomena are usually discussed under the "origins of religion," as contrasted with expositions of the "world's great religions." For the religious practices of savages are shot so full of what many call "magic, superstition, and idolatry" as to seem not to have reached the level of "religion" at all. Even William James did not include religion on this level among his "varieties" of religious experiences. Here I need only point out that little as we may approve the religious ideas and practices of savages we can hardly deny that these constitute their religions. Metaphysicians and theologians usually distinguish between what seem to them aberrations in religion, which they do not like to call religion, and real religion, which is their own ideal formulation.

A person who has studied anthropology or the history of religion must take another path, for he knows how great a variety of objects of devotion men have had. We cannot define religion by saying that it is the worship of God or the gods, but we can define God or the gods by saying they are whatever is the object of devotion. Jesus pointed this out clearly when he said that we cannot worship both God and money, or mammon. Here Jesus as usual was being visionary, since men have always worshiped the security money brings, and always will, but have combined it with love of others (to a point), and even with worship of the God of idealized existence. Sometimes devotion to one's business and social position so takes over that one becomes almost a monotheistic worshiper of mammon, though many mammon worshipers like to belong to stylish churches. Most of us just plug along in polytheistic devotion to science, money, metaphysical dreams, family, social success, and what not.

SOURCES OF SECURITY

Religion is this devotion, dedication, and tremendous concern for and with the sources of security. Religion for most of us is a very immediate concern, as when the Groton boys almost all take communion the Sunday before examination week. Tillich's Ultimate Concern does not make them do this, but terror at the coming ordeal, and hope that there is something, somewhere, that will help them through it. The common element in all religions, that is, religion itself, seems to be a devotion to something on which the people committed seem to themselves to depend, or in which they hope for security, or in which they seem to themselves actually to find it. Whether it is the security given by a fetish, by a ritual, by the loving Jesus, by one's social status, by a substantial bank account, by a title (whether the title be president of the bank, professor, or marquis), or by creativity in art or science, in each of these forms of religion the common element is a focusing of life upon one or more of them as a source of security.

Man lives now, as he has always lived, in a universe, in a human society, and in the face of inner conflicts, all of which threaten to engulf him, and some of which sooner or later will do so. In helplessness people of all civilizations begin their lives, and in helplessness all end them. Although as adults we can somewhat fend for ourselves, all the deeper experiences of personal life and the exigencies of society emphasize the essential impotence of the individual. The mass of men in Canada and the United States, in western Europe and England, live in a security that other men have rarely known. That we make even of this an "Age of Anxiety" shows how inescapably man feels the uncertainty of life. During the "Golden Age" of the nineteenth century, as nostalgic cowards now often conceive it, life expectancy was just half that of our day; pain expectancy, physical torture, cold in winter, inescapable heat in summer, these sat with every man at his fireside and table. With this for the greater part of mankind everywhere went social insecurity, recurrent famine, devastation by arms and invaders. It would be ridiculous to say that we now live in complete security. I only say that even with our relatively far greater security man does not feel more secure, because he has more time to reflect, to pity himself for his still essential helplessness, and to write and read about it. In the "death urge" Freud indicated an amazing aspect of human nature; for he showed that the urge to kill, which at one time we turned against animals and one another, we now turn inwardly upon ourselves. Not only does nature give us ample grounds for anxiety,

but man demands anxiety, creates it within himself, when nature and other men for a time seem to let him alone. What we used to call the "balance of power" we now call a "cold war," so far as I can see only to torture ourselves. Since man alone among animals, apparently, has the power to anticipate coming agonies and death, man is inherently an anxious animal, ever crossing fancied bridges of terror when no actual threats immediately confront him.

I call these threats, or sense of them, collectively the *tremendum,* a Latin word that Otto used in a somewhat different sense and that has, as I use it, its simple original meaning of "that which must be feared" or "the source of terror." I use it precisely because its strange vagueness best conveys the most terrifying part of man's predicament, the very inchoateness of the terror outside and within him.

Human beings as a whole have never been able to face the tremendum as such. Two ineluctable necessities have always forced themselves upon man: one, he must feel that in some measure he understands himself, his origin, his natural environment, and his destiny; and, two, he must give himself the illusion that he has some little control over things. There must be something he can do about it all. Insofar as man has the second illusion, that he can control the uncontrollable, he loses his sense of futility and helplessness. The drive for control has not only produced the gadgets of civilization; it has expressed itself in religious practices of all sorts, from what higher civilizations call "magic," to the ritualistic acts and prayers of the church or the political party, or to the private rituals we all consciously or unconsciously observe. This begins with the earliest childhood: thumb-sucking, the fetishistic blanket, familiar routine in familiar surroundings, sleep ritual, these the child early demands. He may give up some, but as he does so he will cling to others all the more earnestly. Man's rituals make the individual participate in the tremendum to a slight extent, at least, and give him a feeling that by these acts he appeases the tremendum or makes it more apt to befriend him. By the rituals, also, he keeps himself from consciously facing the tremendum's unfathomable depth and power, the actual abyss of the uncontrollable. We all invent little rituals, but few individuals have been able to invent enough to satisfy themselves. In childhood the mother or nurse supplies them to the child. She keeps the child always near her or puts him in a playpen where a fine little world is nicely boxed in for him and the universe excluded. An eighteen-month child is far happier in such a pen than alone in a five-acre lot. Still happier are the little ones strapped to the mothers' backs. In later years the church

or other conventions of society give him other rituals to perform, prayers to say, amulets to wear. Conventional dress is a ritual. We would all be as uncomfortable at a ball in the sport clothing worn here as we would be here in the clothing of a ballroom. As ladies lived in a world where men tipped their hats and gave them seats on a trolley car they lived in a world that was safe. And oddly enough it had the same effect on the men. The drive to security by joining in the procession of the seasons, if only with gay flowers and ribbons in our straw hats in spring, and with the return to felt hats in the fall, produced the great religious festivals; and our concept of a moral law of nature solidified the great legalistic aspects of religion to which we shall return. Rituals of healing, ablution, burial, puberty—these are all manifestations of religion's giving man security from the tremendum by an illusion that he is controlling it.

But witch doctors do cure the sick, as do practitioners of faith healing. When the psychoanalysts say they cannot help a patient until his "resistance" breaks down, I suspect they have only invented a new term for an old phenomenon, since they too can do their work only in an atmosphere of faith.

The magic of faith: is it religion or magic? The question has reduced itself to tautology. Faith that we can do the superhuman, like killing or healing another person by suggestion, gives us power to do the superhuman. Through faith we do control the uncontrollable, some of it, a little. Those who have "lost their faith" often speak of the loss as though they had lost sight or hearing, a faculty of some sort that made them able to do things to themselves and for themselves which now they cannot do. They are quite right; they have lost a real potency, a real power of control. So I must say that to call a belief a "superstition," a ritual "magic," only pronounces a value judgment or a feeling of taste. These are religious beliefs and acts which the person calling them superstition or magic simply does not like.

Before leaving this part of our subject, however, we must ask how the religious attempts to control differ from man's ingenuity in inventing devices by which he indeed gives himself superhuman power, devices that range from the stone implement that multiplies his striking force to the airplane, atom bomb, and computer. At the end we shall suggest that concern with expanding knowledge and control can themselves become a religion for scientists, but, in general, control through understanding the forces of nature stands in sharp contrast to traditional religion, which has been an attempt to control without such understanding. If a Tyrolean peasant protects his house by build-

ing a shrine for the Virgin into its walls, we call it religion, but not when men in the western prairies, with their terrible thunderstorms, protect their houses by putting lightning rods upon them. But our new powers of control have by no means checked inevitable invasions of the uncontrollable tremendum. I cannot assert that men will never be able entirely to control nature for their own ends, but I can say that adequate control does not now appear remotely possible. Such control would do away with man's need of religion, but we need not seriously discuss that eventuality.

Explanation by Beliefs

I have just referred to the second universal in man's religious pattern by speaking of man's "beliefs." By this I do not mean his control through scientific knowledge but the creeds, myths, and philosophical and theological systems by which he gives himself the illusion that he understands the tremendum outside and within him. Perhaps some day we shall know better, but as far as we can now see man alone among the animals has this craving to understand. Some people, of course, have the craving more than others, but all people of normal intelligence must have a sense that they understand nature and their place in it or that their leaders or priests do so. In ancient days, and still among savages, the authorities were usually the "old men." These created stories or, more usually, passed on ones they had once heard from their elders in an indefinite succession of old men—stories of creation, of the origin of evil and the necessity for work, of the stars, the heavens, the depths of the sea, of the origin of life and death, of male and female, good and evil, and of life after death. Such stories the old men told in personal form, as though in answer to questions of four-year-old children: "Who made the world; where is grandma who died; who makes the thunder; who blows the wind; who paints the grass green; who makes the waves in the sea?" The answers we give our children are often apt to be personal also, in terms of God the creator, but in primitive times all the answers were centered in persons, so that all nature became populous with personalities, some of them greater and more powerful than man, but in most respects quite like him. Other such "persons" had the spooky character of the forms men meet in dreams—phantoms, yet with human personalities and motives. The advance of science has put physical forces such as gravity or electric power in the place of most of these personalities, but non-scientific civilizations still account for the storms and plagues as manifestations of the wrath of divine persons much as Homer did.

Insanity and illness are seen as demonic possession. Man can face the perils of life so much better if he feels that he understands, or that the medicine man does so. If Christianity, and still more science, has since given us different sorts of answers from this, the primitive still persists in our reactions to the horrible, such as the birth of a mongoloid. A Person must have done this to us. And the idea has formal legal confirmation in what the law describes as "acts of God," that is, all disasters from natural causes such as storms or floods.

We ordinarily call "mythology" the attempt to explain nature in terms of such personalities and their activities. But if we now define "myth" as an explanation of reality given to conceal from ourselves our lack of understanding, then myths are with us in all aspects of modern life. Like most people I am not a natural scientist, and so the scientific accounts as I finally understand them, and the implications I draw of how the forces of nature operate, are all ridiculously mythological from the point of view of real science. I am neither a vitalist nor a non-vitalist because scientists themselves do not agree on the subject, but I am ready to go either way when they decide upon a theory, whether I myself understand it or not. Meanwhile, of course, I live in a mythical world in which "dead" and "alive" are absolute opposites, and I find for my purposes that that myth serves very well. I use my pseudo-scientific myths of nature for two reasons: first, to have a rough and ready understanding with which I can meet the problems of life and, second, to have a sense that I am not lost in a meaningless tremendum. Ancient myths and creeds served all these purposes.

Individuals have rarely dared to face the fact that they live in an unknown world, about them and within, and no society has tried to face it. "Agnosticism" is an unpopular word, and "agnostics" are suspected individuals because they challenge the pretense of men's beliefs and throw men back upon their ignorance and helplessness, which, by their myths and rituals, they are trying to conceal from their own horrified eyes. To live in full awareness of their ignorance would crush the vast majority of human spirits. So between themselves and the incomprehensible they have universally put curtains painted with explanations, to give themselves the illusion that they understand the meaning, nature, and destiny of themselves and the world about them. To these explanations, along with rituals of control, every other element in religion is secondary. Scholars of religion have taken as its basis various notions, such as "mana" and the "idea of the holy," as contrasted with the profane. But none of them proves to be universal, and each has

been challenged by other scholars. Each is too specific, and in religion the basis and the primary solutions are not specific at all. The common element is the quite vague insecurity and diffused anxiety, which different peoples and different individuals experience and meet in different ways. Only the insecurity and the craving for an explanation and control remain universal, along with every civilization's projecting primitive or sophisticated myths, rites, creeds, and faiths to make painted curtains about them. The vast majority of men get these curtains and their ready-made designs from their societies, whether from dogmas given by stated organizations of a professional religious group, or from the "old men" or "old women" of the tribe, or, often today, from journalistic reports of college courses that introduce us to the fringes of scientific theory and give us, like other myths, the illusion of understanding. Religion accepts such accounts as truth, not hypothesis, and makes men pattern their lives on them. Not the truth of the account but its acceptance and one's commitment to it constitute religion. True or false, the stories and rituals become religion when they are accepted as describing our universe, the reality in which we live, and when they actually make the unformed tremendum seem something formed and manageable.

Fear and Love

Thus far I have described religion as man's devices for escape from fear into peace of mind. If the fear of the Lord, or of the tremendum, is not the beginning of wisdom in our sense, it has universally been thought of as the beginning of religion. Those sects of Christianity flourish best which most emphasize the terrors of purgatory and hell. Traditional Protestantism and Catholicism alike have gone on to mitigate the terrors they have first evoked—or given concrete form to. The sacred always implied punishment for its violation. So holy images, objects, even holy words, and forms, cannot be used lightly or "in vain," for they have an inherent power to punish misuse, or a power behind them will punish. "I, Yahweh, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation" (Deut. 5:9) applied to much more than idolatry. And Christianity echoed it with the famous text: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). The same attitude appears in Homer, Hesiod, and the Greek tragedians. Universally men have had rituals to placate their personalizations of the tremendum's horror. Sacrifices, purifications, Ave Maria, *ora pro nobis,* all the schemes and days of atonement, give a relative security from divine wrath.

In the higher religions man has gone beyond this, as the Israelites early did. For in the same sentence in which God declared vengeance upon malefactors who hate him, he goes on to say, "but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." The whole is a projection of the old stern father who was kind to obedient children but vicious in punishing the disobedient ones. The only escape from the terror of his discipline was in his love, and the greatest discovery of the higher religions, psychologically as well as theologically, is that "Perfect love casteth out fear" (I John 4:18). "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The fear is still there, for by indirection, but still very directly, it is said that those who do not accept God's terms will "perish." God is still the damning God. We repress the basic religious terror only as we love God and accept his love. Religious love does not really cast out fear but only represses it. If we lose the sense of God's loving us, the old God of terror at once rises to horrify us. Winning God's love by accepting God's love and loving him in return becomes, then, essentially the best form of placating God's wrath. The methods of placating God can be very different. If we believe that we can be safe from the tremendum only by offering it the pulsing hearts of human and animal beings, our way of life and sense of values will not at all resemble those of people who believe that God's in his heaven and all's right with the world and that we can forget all the divine punishments, or sanctions, as we sing *sanctus, sanctus, sanctus* in grateful response to a God of love. If man throughout history has generally been more anxious to keep out of God's hands than to feel safe in his arms, we must admit that love is for man at least the most constructive form of appeasement. In some rare religious geniuses, such as Socrates, the Buddha, and Gandhi, perfect love may indeed almost be said to have cast out fear. But I have never known such a man or woman personally and can say that when love is an incentive in religion at all it is usually as much the reverse of terror on the same coin as it is in the quotation I just made from Yahweh. My sainted mother used to tell me that we must indeed fear "sin."

It is useful also to see that religious experiences can arise through either the life or death instinct, as Freud called them. We have been talking from the point of view of the life instinct, the id, which wants to preserve itself from the extinction threatened by the tremendum, religions that look for a happy life here and hereafter. In many religious experiences, however, the death urge, thanatos, takes over. The

craving to die in Christ that he may live in us is a different experience from the craving to wear a crown of glory in this life and in heaven. The two experiences may, of course, be deeply mixed in any one individual, but the religion of death, if I may call it so, can quite take over in its desire to vanish in God or the universal. We think of this primarily in association with Eastern mysticism, where one hopes eventually to be dissolved in Brahma or Nirvana. Terror of the tremendum becomes like vertigo, a solution of the horror of the emptiness beneath a great height by a craving to plunge down into it. The two types of experience appear in both East and West. I was one who got a vertiginous ecstasy singing

> Oh to be nothing, nothing,
> Only to lie at His feet,
> A broken and emptied vessel,
> For the Master's use made meet.

But though this does not go so far as reabsorption in Nirvana, even my Methodist fellows rarely sang this as their favorite hymn, if they sang it at all. On the other hand, the great mass of Hindus and Buddhists have not the slightest anticipation of being absorbed; religion becomes for them a matter of temple rituals so that one may accumulate enough merit to appear in the next incarnation in a somewhat better state. That is, they assert the id as do we Westerners. But the religion of personal glory as over against that of personal extinction illustrates in what utterly different ways the religious impulse has expressed itself. Actually, both are looking for security.

Legalism

The religious impulse, indeed, expresses itself in far more varieties than William James ever suggested. For example, he never alludes to the religion of legalism, an all-pervasive type that centers in obedience to definite statutes. For Moslems, Brahmans, orthodox Jews, and Calvinist Protestants man's piety is essentially measured by observance of the code, and every religion is full of it. The orthodox Jew says of his fellow, "He is a very pious man. He will not answer the phone on the Sabbath." My Protestant seniors used to say that I was a good boy because I did not drink, smoke, or swear. Obedience to Allah's commands is the very heart of Islam. Food tabus, in-marriage, and a thousand other requirements mark the proper Brahman. The point is that to do what we think is right is a great source of peace of mind, security, to most of the people in this room. "I could not live with myself if I did that" is something we would all consider very high motivation. And

we all want to live at peace with ourselves. The superego, or conscience, or what you will, finds itself spelled out in the religious code, and we get peace of mind, or anxiety and guilt, as we do or do not obey it. Society gives us many codes: those of business, the club, patriotism, scientific procedure, logic, as well as those we would more ordinarily associate with religion. The fact is, of course, that the code you really obey is the code of your real religion. You are probably a polytheist and obey several, and get security from them all.

Orthodoxy

Another great form of religion is what I call orthodoxy, the security one gets from a scheme of reality. Most of us are here on Star Island because we have seen the old schemes dissolve—through the emergence of historical criticism, nuclear physics, and the newly dawning biological sciences, to name but a few of the modern revolutions—and have none to put in their places. There has been much talk about the loss of purpose and meaning for the individual which these brought about. If we now bravely say that we have lost only illusions in losing the old schemes of reality for man, we have no less a sense that we have lost a blessed sense of security, one that our forebears, and many of our contemporaries, found in a creed, a philosophy, an entelechy, which for them was the final truth. This drive to understand can be on the level of the simplest myth, as that a primeval turtle created the world or that the world is governed by a group of gods like the Olympians; or it can rise to the most abstract metaphysical or theological abstraction, which I call polysyllabic mythology. All bring the security of freedom from doubt. The great classic of this form of religion is Newman's *Apologia,* in which certainty of knowledge appears as his passionate goal from early years. When he found certainty in the Roman Catholic Church he for the first time came into real peace. At the end he almost purrs that since he entered the Church "a thousand difficulties do not make a doubt." We have this sort of religious experience, or at least our radicals do, in political creeds also. We liberals, who still doubt many things, quite lack the sureness of touch of the Communists and the Birchers. It is the segregationists of the deep South, not we advocates of equal rights for all citizens, who quite confidently know where they should go and what is the next step. It is the attitude of commitment that here again makes an experience religious, not the value and actual truth of the belief to which we are committed. The peace that comes from such commitment is what the old people referred to when they talked of the consolations of religion.

BEAUTY

Many people also find their deepest religious experience in aesthetic gratifications. Presented with works of beauty they find themselves exalted, and with a sense of value and meaning. Religions of almost all sorts utilize this type of experience as they use music, pageantry, color, and architectural design. To our emotions (and this is what we are talking about all along) beauty becomes truth and the good, and often leads us to experience them in a way that words, theories, and laws do not. When I was a young man at Oxford I used to attend the services in the cathedral with breathless delight. I was almost at the point of joining up with them when one Sunday I heard the seraphic murmur of the boys' choir chanting Psalm 137: "O daughters of Babylon . . . Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rocks." A world of beauty suddenly vanished from me. I mentioned it that afternoon at tea to a theological don. He commented, "Oh, you listen to the words!" He went for the beauty, as do many who love the symbolism and ritual of the great churches and to whom the words have little importance. In its spell they have their religious experience. Beauty in poetry, ritual, and the plastic arts are themselves the source, the being, of religious experience for many, and will always be so. For as they immerse themselves in beautiful form they feel their own formlessness, which is terror, take on beautiful form, which is peace.

Religious experience can also come to us through devotion to fellowmen and social justice. Others find it in patriotism, loyalty to their inner group; still others in the family, in the love of one's mate, in devotion to one's heart's desire, whatever that may be. Some devotion is a purely selfish delight in one's own good fortune, like James's healthy-minded people. Mysticism, in which James found the highest religious experience, I have already mentioned as the religion that in its final form seeks self-dissolution by identifying one's existence with the great tremendum itself. Patterns of redemption and purification dominate other experiences when the tremendum invades one and sinks one in guilt. To these James's conversion experiences belong.

These patterns are ever with us. The varieties of religious experience are varied indeed. Men have killed their firstborn in order to placate the tremendum, have beaten themselves with lashes, starved themselves from food and sex, in the tragic conviction that they would be safer from the malevolence of the universe and of other men if they anticipated their torture by torturing themselves. Or they have set up

phalli or phallic figures or had sacred intercourse in temples in order to share in divine love.

Beneath the Varieties

In all these the common denominator is devotion, commitment, service to the tremendum, the attempt in one way or another to placate it, appease it, even to declare that it is a source of beauty and love, anything so that men could have peace of mind, walk through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil. For this men have fought their bitterest wars, done the most ghastly crimes, as well as have risen to the greatest heights of sacrificial devotion. It is the devotion that makes a religion, not the fact that the devotion pledges itself to this rather than that or expresses itself thus rather than so.

Hunger, thirst, cold, sex—and religion—these are the universals. Insofar as we have any sense of direction or value in life we are all, for better or worse, religious.

Reformation of Religious Blueprints

The meaning of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science lies not in our concern about better science but in our sense that science has destroyed the old mythological structure of the religions of the West and that we do not know how we as individuals or a civilization are to go on from here. I should like to close by pointing out still another great division in types of religious experience. I call these two the blueprint type and the creative type. The vast majority of men have lived, and presumably will always live, by blueprints. Tradition in the tribe or church, we have indicated, has transmitted the proper codes for legalism and ritual, the proper myths or theologies, the objects and forms of symbols and art, in terms of which men could understand their place in the universe and give their lives meaning. If many have found more security in their bank books than in their prayer books, both have required an acceptance of standards and a pattern of faith. The modern mind has discovered that not only the gods and myths of others but the theological traditions of our own are the products of human wishes, fears, and dreams.

In such a case we see we must turn, not to the traditions that have grown up about the great religious geniuses of the past, or to their own time-conditioned teachings, but to the men themselves as men. We see that the great ones did not live by blueprints at all but by their own creativity. The religion of aestheticism, for example, can take the form of one's being moved by the painting, architecture, poetry, or music of

others, which is the blueprint approach, or by painting, designing, and writing poetry or music oneself. Wallace Stevens, the brilliant poet, was sent poems by writers from all over the world. He said he never read them, since the danger of unconscious imitation was too great. If others wanted to read his poems, very well; but it is clear that the one thing he treasured was writing for and out of himself. Every great genius, including every great religious genius, has essentially done the same. Like Amos they have thundered their own ethical idealism in terms of "Thus saith the Lord"; or like Jesus they have countered "But *I* say unto you." The followers of such a creative genius have turned him into a blueprint, but Gandhi and Francis of Assisi created their own values.

We are living now in one of the greatest, if not the greatest, creative ages in history. Men are so rapidly tossing out the old in science to create new working hypotheses that a man who leaves his work for as much as ten years to be a dean can almost never catch up and create in science again. At the same time, less rapidly than in science but still in such speed as the world has never seen, a worldwide social revolution is going on. The myth of white supremacy will long be repeated in some places but is as much exploded as the seven-days creation in Genesis. The myth is also passing that we must still call a marriage holy wedlock even though, after all possible attempts to make it so have failed, it actually remains "holy deadlock." The great blueprints of man are blanching out in our hands. Our ultra-conservatives still see the genius of American civilization in "free enterprise," that is, the right of the individual to make and keep as much money and power for himself as he can get, in any way he can get it, a conception that logically leads to anarchy. At the other extreme stand those who think that the purpose of our government should be the greatest good for the greatest number, an idea that logically comes out in socialism or communism. The man in the middle who wants neither of these must himself create his ideals and live without a formula.

We must live creatively, think creatively about man's inner and outer life, not sit wringing our hands, lamenting that natural science is advancing so much faster than spiritual understanding. If we do not create new spiritual and ethical values, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

And how do we go about doing so? By giving our real devotion to what we think is truly constructive for ourselves and society. In this way alone can we carry on the best in religion, and so can we be deeply religious in our science. For on this level all science becomes religious,

that is, in its devotion to and application of the best it can discover. The great ones will be creative in their devotion; but they will never forget the principle by which science has introduced a new epoch in human evolution, that personal conviction must always be subject to correction in terms of new data or knowledge.

Star Island will never produce any single formula or model for reconciling religion with the new contents of physics, genetics, psychology, or social structure. We do not write blueprints here. In the new world our task at present is to make new forms for ourselves as we find the old ones, by which the mass of men will continue to live, do not meet our personal needs. If we ourselves no longer believe that the God of Einstein's universe is counting the hairs of our heads, or stands ready to move mountains into the sea if we ask it with sufficiently commanding a faith, the simple fact remains that we can still pray, can break down the pettiness of our ordinary lives in the reality of what seems to us a transcendent good. Socrates was killed, among other reasons, for taking the gods of Athens too lightly, but he never lost the vivid experience of the little presence within him. I do not speak of religion in terms of an organization designed to propagate faith in a tradition but in terms of the still small voice in our hearts. Many great scientists obviously live by this, while they cut, destroy, and build anew.

Security? We may find it as we create fresh patterns of thought, conduct, value, emotional responses. But we must never seek the full security of an opiate, as Marx called traditional blueprints. But the great creative dreams of Marx became themselves an opiate as his followers turned them into programs and dogmas. All creative dreams become opiates when they seem so true that they stupefy our individual creative criticism, however much they may inspire to action, as does Marxism, or lull people's minds in peace. I can read no other lesson from the religious experiences of mankind, at least for us, but that out of the ruins of the old, together with the new knowledge, we must have the courage to create again. If in the spirit of modern thinking we know we can now create only working hypotheses, formulations of perhaps temporary pragmatic value, then let us create working hypotheses of hope and meaning and create ourselves anew in the process. We live both as scientists and human beings, not by the permanent value of our creations, but by the very act of creating. How our creations will be represented in later blueprints does not concern us. In the new age we must pray, even though we no longer know to what or whom we pray, pray that in all humility we have the courage to live devoted to

what seems best for us and for all men. Religion at its highest has given men security as they have sought the best they could find and ascribed that best to the tremendum. If our ancestors did this as dogma, we must do the same as working hypothesis, but with no less devotion.

The best scientists I know assure me that the laws of science are all human formulations subject to correction, formulas that we project upon the world and find that they take us a long way in controlling it. Certainly the patterns of cause and effect in human history, by which we understand and use the past, are, I assure you, human projections. So we must admit that our values, goals, and standards are not divine revelations but are our own imperfect creations, while we still believe in them and live by them as Wallace Stevens believed in his poetry and as we trust the working hypotheses of science when we fly in a plane. Else we are little children who, having built castles with our blocks, have dashed them down in glorious destruction, then stood and wept for what we have lost. Our old castles are gone, but the blocks remain, the blocks of human creativity. We have come to Star Island each to put a few of his own blocks together.