

In the Periodicals

The problems of population and environment are increasingly related under the rubric of "ecology" as is demonstrated in many articles. The Reverend Hugh McCandess in "Malthus Had the Answer" (*Witness*, June 11, 1970, pp. 7-8) states: "Our children know that the land God gave us should be approached prayerfully and reverently. Already we are feeling the pinch of this complicated question of ecology. . . . Religion has always dealt with ecology, ever since the garden of Eden. When the herdsman Abel was killed by the farmer Cain, it was a true picture of commercial sociology" (p. 7).

A more appreciative approach to sociology is given by Gregory Baum in "Personal Testimony to Sociology" (*Ecumenist* [November-December 1969], pp. 1-2) where he finds new and old inspiration in sociology: "When I began the study of sociology, I thought that the sociology of religion would be a comparatively small part of it. . . . To my surprise I discovered that the sociological tradition had an altogether central place. . . . The sacred was a central category for many sociologists, even if most of them were positivists of one kind or another and had abandoned belief in God. For Durkheim religion is essentially sacred, and without religion as the celebration of the deepest dimension society cannot perpetuate itself and become creative. This was the scientific conclusion of Durkheim, the anticlerical agnostic" (p. 2).

A comparable testimony to the importance of sociology is found in J. Edgar Brans in "History, Religion, and the Failure of Nerve Today" (*Ecumenist* [March-April 1970], pp. 35-38): "The campaigns of racial integration and civil rights, the opposition to the military draft and the war in Vietnam, the international assault upon university structure and administration, and the ubiquity of the sociologist, all underlie a paramount concern for the individual in his concrete situation. . . . Refuge from the machine-like impersonality of society is sought in a variety of surprisingly old, and for the most part, Eastern practices: drug addiction, astrology, divination and 'transcendental meditation.' Group therapy, which is also enjoying an extraordinary vogue, supplies the kind of intimate and secret association provided by the circles of initiates into the mystery religions of antiquity. . . . Here, then, is the crux of the matter: What is man all about? If the answer is nothing but what he makes for himself as an individual, then there is no reason why scientific achievements should count for anything" (p. 38). The author emphatically implies that scientific achievements are of supreme importance, for he calls attention to the classic phrase of Gilbert Murray, "failure of nerve," and recalls that "it was, generally speaking, characterized by a loss of confidence in the utility of ideal inquiry, a lack of interest in the visible world, and an all-consuming preoccupation with personal salvation. The result was a thousand-year standstill in the advance of knowledge" (p. 37).

Discussions of birth control continue unabated in many religious journals, especially in response to or in protest against the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Rev. H. J. McSorley, C.S.P., a member of the Pauline Institute for Religious Research, gathered an impressive array of historical precedents all bearing on "The Right of Catholics to Dissent from 'Humanae Vitae'" (*Ecumenist*

[November–December 1969], pp. 5–9). The Summer 1970 issue of *Religion in Life*, largely devoted to the contentious problems of population control and abortion, contains six articles under the general heading of "Ethical Issues for the 1970's" which range all the way from the advocates of situation ethics to the great opponent of such ethics, Paul Ramsey, who writes on "Feticide/Infanticide upon Request" (pp. 170–86). Also worthy of mention in the same issue is Kenneth Vaux who, in "Cyborg, R. U. Human?" (pp. 187–92), poignantly states: "How we shall rebuild man is now the question. How much of a machine can we make man, and how much of a man can we make the machine? These are vital questions before not only the medical-technological professions and spiritual leaders, but also civilization" (p. 188).

One of the serious modern problems involving sex is clearly the dissolution of an unconsummated marriage and the many steps to be taken in order that official recognition may be granted by the Roman church. Some of these steps are described by Trevor Beeson in "Love over Law" (*Christian Century*, June 17, 1970, p. 748): "A Roman Catholic seeking dispensation of an unconsummated marriage is, strange to relate, at the mercy of the pope! Although applications for marriage nullification can normally be dealt with by diocesan tribunals, cases of alleged nonconsummation must go to the Holy Father himself. And the dear man requires very good evidence that no one is trying to pull the wool over his eyes. For instance, a decree published in 1923 devotes 50 pages to the procedure to be used for medical examination of a female applicant. No conceivable detail is omitted—and the lady who objects to spending half an hour in a warm bath before submitting to the rigor of the examination may appeal to the judges who in turn consult the defender of the bond. If these gentlemen agree to it, the taps are 'left unturned'" (p. 748).

Another article dealing with population problem is "Feeding the Hungry" (*New Republic*, June 20, 1970, pp. 19–21) by Wayne H. Davis who says: "George Wald, Nobel Prize-winning biologist at Harvard, was recently quoted as saying that life on earth is threatened with extinction within the next 15 to 20 years. When a scientist makes a statement like that, you can figure that either he is a nut or he has carefully studied the situation and knows what he is talking about. Before you write George Wald off as a nut you should stop to think that nearly every other scientist who has been studying these problems is also predicting massive tragedy for mankind" (p. 19).

Sidney E. Mead, president emeritus of Meadville/Lombard Theological School and at present professor in the history department and in the school of religion at the University of Iowa, defends his lifework as "In Quest of America's Religion" (*Christian Century*, June 17, 1970, pp. 752–56). Deeply aware that American civilization is pluralistic and not to be constricted in sectarian religious molds, he is encouraged by his contacts with undergraduates: "The teacher of undergraduates . . . confronts in them the fact of pluralism in our society. . . . The traditional language [of religion] has become obsolete as an instrument for talking about present religious experience. It must be translated into a modern idiom, and unless this is done many of the 'now' generation will have to decide that institutional religion is not for them" (p. 754). He emphasizes: "In the model of the Republic, the civil authority intends that the temple-ists shall curb one another by protecting the right of each continually to tell the other that he is not God" (p. 756).

May Daly in "The Problem of Hope" (*Commonweal*, June 26, 1970, pp. 314–

17), gives eloquent expression to the deep objection to an extreme transcendence of God: "The common understanding of God expressed itself in terms of spatial transcendence, in terms of a God 'up there.' Moreover, even in the writings of skilled theologians the language of transcendence frequently slipped into spatial categories that were misleading. This language encouraged projection mechanisms by which human latent qualities were frequently bestowed upon this 'supreme being,' who then was said to have these qualities in a supereminent degree. Many envisioned themselves as living beneath the shadow of a tyrant God who had everything to which they themselves dared to aspire. The 'supreme being' was a cause of alienation, cutting men off from their own deepest identity. The death of this caricature of God was a signal for the birth of authentic man" (p. 315). The author concludes: "If theology is to be of real help to those in quest of psychic revolution, of transformation of consciousness, it must . . . return to recovery of the living *presence* in nature and in human life" (p. 317).

Teilhard de Chardin is the process theologian and scientist whose system implied "the evolution of matter," and he is mentioned by Jerome Perlonski (in "The Unpublished Works of Teilhard de Chardin," *Theoria to Theoria* [January 1970], pp. 63-68) who vindicates Teilhard's "pantheism" against his orthodox detractors: "The Church's rejection of this type of humanism stems in great measure from its misunderstanding of the pantheist note inherent within it. In 'Pantheisme et Christianisme' (1923), Teilhard expands the ancient notion of pantheism by defining it simply as the religious perception of the whole. It is a feeling shared by poets, artists, mystics, a sort of cosmic awareness, more diffuse than individual awareness, more intermittent, but perfectly defined, a sort of sentiment of the presence of all beings at once, these being perceived not as many or separated, but as making a part of the same unity, at least in the future. This pantheist sentiment is moreover, or seems to be, fundamental to the human spirit" (p. 63).

Lord Northbourne's "Religion and Science" (*Studies in Comparative Religion* [October 1969], pp. 225-38) is a lecture given to students in a university department of agriculture in England and adequately presents the modern situation as "marked by an unprecedented intellectual confusion arising out of the fact that the astonishingly rapid advance of modern science has caused many beliefs, axioms and assumptions of very long standing to be seriously questioned" (p. 225). The article continues: "Science is not worthy of the name unless it takes into account everything that can come within the range of the intelligence and not one aspect of reality alone" (p. 227). "Religion gets into trouble when it tries to adapt itself to the approach of science, instead of trying to perfect its own approach" (p. 231). Lord Northbourne enlarges the concept of intelligence which gives us scientific fact but which in religion can penetrate "beyond the confines of the universe of phenomena and give us a glimpse of what is greater than ourselves" (p. 238).

One of the leading British theologians who attempted to formulate theology empirically is F. R. Tennant, author of *Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 1968). His contribution is evaluated by R. C. Wallace in three issues of *Theology: A Monthly Review* (February 1970, pp. 73-81; March 1970, pp. 104-11; and April 1970, pp. 168-71). "Tennant deals directly with natural theology . . . developed to provide an adequate account of our knowl-

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edge of ourselves and of the external world without any reference to the theological construction" (p. 75). Tennant's "concept is of a God who is present to the world as its ground and source" (p. 76). The reviewer, Wallace, quotes Tennant to the effect that "Science's progress is due to the quasi-religious faith that the world is amenable to reason, though there is no *a priori* reason why it should be" (p. 79). From the point of view of R. C. Thomas's more traditional Christian theism, Tennant "does not always recognize that, for the purposes of Christian theism, which is what he purports to explicate, the transcendent cannot be conceived exhaustively or adequately as an extrapolation from the empirical" (p. 69). Yet more attention should be "paid to Tennant's contribution and to its possible restatement" of natural theology (p. 171).

Bishop Ernest William Barnes of Birmingham, author of a Gifford Lecture on Science and Religion, was emphatically concerned with these issues. His wide interests are summarized by a letter from his son, E. J. Barnes of the British Embassy of Tel Aviv, to the editor of *Theology: A Monthly Review* (February 1970): "My father was interested in many things . . . science and theology, of course, but also such things as truth, social justice, socialism, eugenics, the welfare of the ordinary man in industrial society and, perhaps above all, international peace which he profoundly believed to be an essential part of the Christian message" (p. 83).

A witty remark by Archbishop William Temple is given by Dorothy Howell-Thomas in *Theology: A Monthly Review* (April 1970, p. 173): "William Temple used to quote his mother as evading arguments with her family with 'You may know more but I know better.'" Now, we wonder, to which specialist, theologian or man of science, this remark is more pertinent!

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