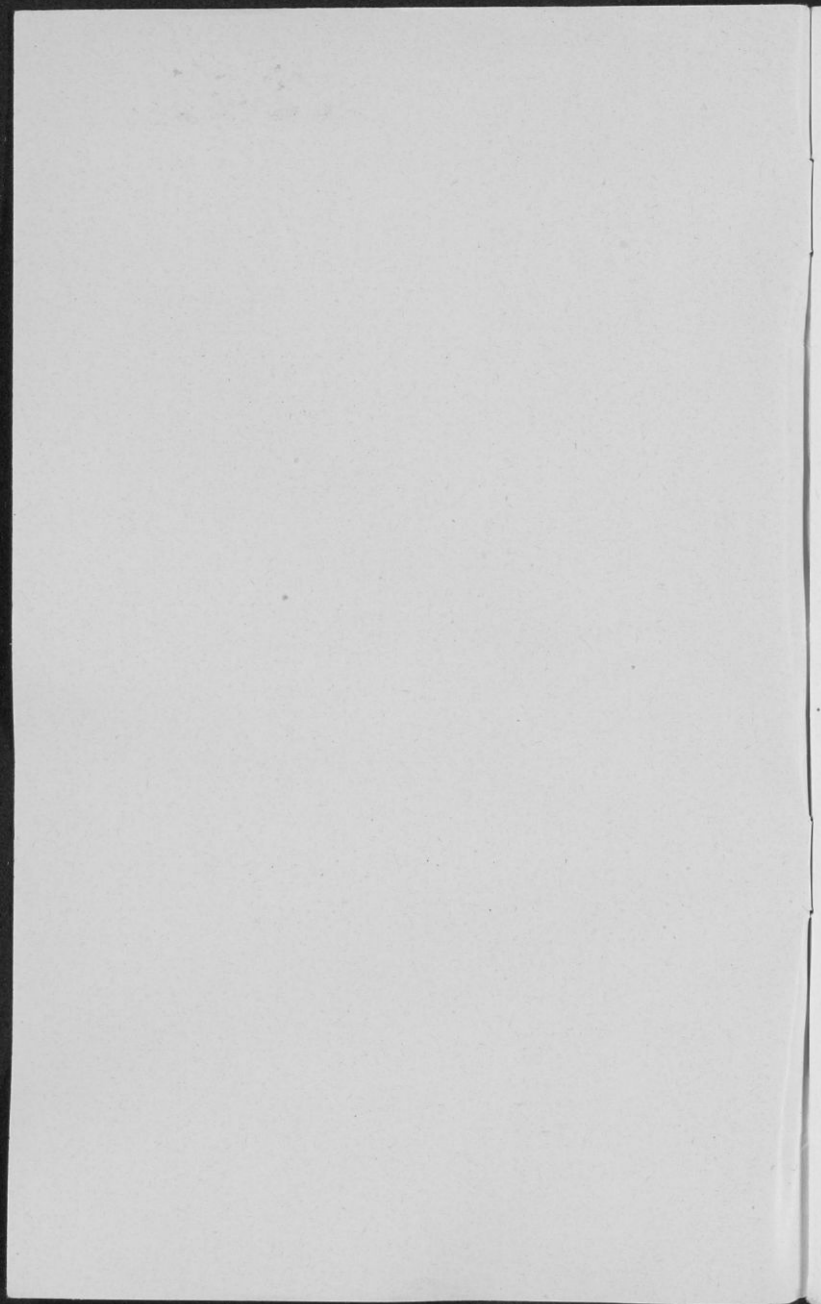


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**A
Christian Layman
Affirms His
Faith**

by

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Says 'Civilization Paganism' Is Doing Great Harm In World

SOME time between the two World Wars, in the pages of one of the most widely circulated American magazines, Rupert Hughes, a popular author, told the world that Christianity is "unbearably bestial" and that he could "break down and sob with pity for the poor dear people" it "tormented slowly into their graves." He said a minister had recently got up in his pulpit and asked his congregation if there were any present who really believed in the Apostles' Creed, and no one rose! He said he did not believe that professed Christians themselves believe one-fourth of their own creeds.

Later this author, who also enjoyed wide acceptance as a popular historian, made a considerable stir with some candid comments on George Washington which have historic justification. Yet those comments brought forth howls. No howls sounded when he advanced evidence to demonstrate "the utter falsity and absurdity" of the Bible and denounced Christianity as a filthy thing.

His whole article on "Why I Quit Going to Church" was a challenge to both Christians and Jews. Clergymen were precluded from answering it, because those who occupy the viewpoint of writers such as he see nothing but a hypocrite in a cleric's robe. Merely to be a minister or nun

or priest or rabbi is deemed *prima facie* evidence of hypocrisy!

Well, the article got under my skin for a variety of reasons. I am not a clergyman, and I have no doubt that clergymen have at times pointed me out as a poor example of Christian. Certainly I have been ticked off for lapses. But I profess a belief in Christianity. And when I declare my faith I'm willing to back it up. No man can tell me that my Christian belief is bestial stupidity, etc., etc. and have me sit by twiddling my thumbs, with pursed lips and nothing more than a look of hurt innocence on my dumb countenance. Furthermore no man can convince me that religion is merely a polemical topic of interest only to the ladies of sacristy societies. I know religion obviously lives and that without enlightened religion civilized society can only go on in a state of confusion. I have seen the effect of religion on races and individuals, in times of prosperity and in times of widespread calamity and death, all around the world.

So I wrote an answer to the author's diatribe. I am competent to judge an article, since I have written many of them for excellent magazines; I know that my answer embarrassed the editor. He couldn't use it because at that time he had contracted to publish a series of Hughes' stories and he felt it might injure the author with his audience. I took it then to the editor of another magazine, who was equally embarrassed because his firm published Hughes' books. I thereupon

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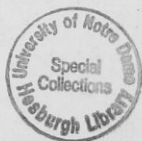
handed the article to a religious publication which seemed glad to publish it.

That was before World War II. I might have forgotten the matter if it were not for the many extraordinary stories I have heard of the effect of my rejoinder upon many distressed people of all religious denominations. Apparently Hughes had given expression to widespread skepticism based on superficial knowledge and distorted facts and false impressions.

I have no desire to single out Rupert Hughes, but it does happen that he has an aptitude for dramatizing popular misconceptions and fallacies; and his article expressed so fully the often heard arguments of popular skeptics that he may well be accepted as their symbol and champion. In one person or another, you have met him many times. His party seems, in fact, to be growing as confusion grows in this world—and there appear no clear objectives in our designs for living. So I will continue to use him and his arguments as convenient patterns of popular skepticism.

Atomic Bomb Has Increased Skepticism

The bursting of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima has increased this skepticism and led to more chaotic thinking and a sort of despair among people of wavering faith. Even Dr. Smyth in his wonderful and thrilling report upon the development of the bomb wrote sardonically that perhaps it provides mankind with a means of committing suicide.



In the meantime, however, don't be discouraged. You will live on and the greatest problems you will ever face must continue to be purely personal ones. Whether your end comes from a world explosion or an infected toenail will make little difference. But you may profitably learn this from the bomb, since knowledge of this immutable fact was the foundation upon which atomic energy was discovered and the bomb itself finally manufactured: *Matter never dies, it merely changes form; and matter and energy are both the same thing in varying proportions.* What you are, and what makes you tick, will never cease, though our human senses may not be able to take your measure in the other forms.

Now, getting back to this world and the individual, our author, Hughes, said he was happier than any Christian he knew, as if this were justification complete for his attacks on the beliefs of others. Whether or not he still enjoys this happiness I cannot say. But for my part I am not happier than most pagans I know. I have seen too much of this world and all its sufferings to renounce the Christian principle of universal brotherhood and mutual responsibility. How can anyone blandly dissociate himself from the suffering about us?

As I write this I can recall vividly naked children with bellies bloated with water, running beside my junk in China, wailing for food. How many Americans realize, even now with so much

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pictorial evidence before us, that the vast majority of human beings are always hungry? If you give a copper to a child in Peking, say, will he run and get a piece of candy or bubble gum? No. He'll run and buy a scrap of food to help satisfy the perpetual gnawing within his empty stomach.

I recall a man slowly strangled to death at a way station of the Pukow Railway because he picked up a basketful of coal shaken from a freight car. I recall a leper with a face like Camembert cheese tinkling her bell in the market-place of Addis-Ababa, calling out "Unclean! Unclean!"—just as the lepers whom Christ cleansed must have done. I recall untidy camps on the edges of African wildernesses, surrounded by litters of human bones where the hyenas moaned at night. I recall the cells of Yoshiwara where girls sold themselves into debauchery and disease by the thousands to pay off the debts of their parents. I recall heaps of naked human bodies fed upon by crows that had no understanding of pestilence. I recall beggars at Chang-Chia-K'ou, squatting in the sun, eating lice off their own bodies.

A Plea For More Practical Christianity

These personal recollections are important because they happened at times when there was "peace" in the world. Who today is unaware of the wide-flung and indescribable misery in a world at war and emerging from war? Who can close his eyes to the pain and horror? What respect then can I have for the opinions of one

whose philosophy is summed up in the fatuous statement that he "is happier than any Christian"? Certainly it is no valid indictment of Christianity. It is rather a plea for more and more practical Christianity.

I have touched mud and I do not offer myself as any fine example for social behavior; there's something deeply, humanly comforting in the thought that Christ gathered about Him a gang of hard-working fishermen—cheese-eaters, wine-drinkers, with fish-scales in their beards often enough, whose faith and example changed the face of the world against all the unceasing powers of evil. This is a fact that cannot be controverted, though it may be ignorantly and maliciously distorted.

One of my companions in the campaign in German East Africa acquired a body-servant who soon attracted the attention of the other officers. They started a game which consisted in offering this boy money to procure native women for them. This kind of thing was regarded by the other boys as a joke—or an opportunity. But the new boy resented it angrily. It was this unusual attitude that seemed so funny. Otherwise the boy was quiet, efficient, hard-working, decent and self-effacing. More than a month passed before the white men found out he was a Christian from the Belgian Congo, and shame ended their game. But who was the Christian?—the cynical white man or that good black man?

I have met Mongol horsemen in the Gobi

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Desert who were good Christian men. My cook, a Goanese, in Aden, Arabia, used to appear before me in person only twice a week; on Mondays to take the orders for the week, as he was duty bound, and on Sunday mornings, entirely on his own responsibility, to remind me with much embarrassment that it was time for me to go to church. Stewart Edward White spoke of the extraordinarily fine character of a Christian Canadian Indian whom he encountered in the wilderness far out of touch with any civilized community. I learned from such as they the universal nature of the Christian belief and spirit.

Returning to our own United States, when Mr. Hughes pointed out the fact that paganism is on the increase here and that he belongs to the majority who are not Christians, it was perfectly timely for me to point out that though Christianity may not be keeping pace with the increase in population, crime and disregard of law were indeed keeping pace and traveling faster. When I first wrote this, not many years ago, it referred mainly to the increase of crime among adults. Today it is extended frighteningly to juveniles. The appalling increase in juvenile crime has been amply attested by our highly efficient FBI. There can be little doubt that much of this is directly traceable to the "unfettering of the human conscience"; for all the young pagan has to fear today, if the Christian concept of morals is derided, is getting caught. Those who have reported for us on conditions in Nazi Germany and Japan were astonished at the lack

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of a sense of shame or responsibility for war crimes. Among pagans it seems to me that that is perfectly understandable and logical; but certainly it is shocking to find the same attitude among the youth of a nation such as ours which claims to be most civilized of all.

Crime And Immorality Rise As Belief In God Wanes

RECENTLY I read the "Heptameron." I had read it secretly when somewhat younger for the forbidden thrills it contained. I find it a vastly different book from what I had recalled. Since there were no daily newspapers in Margaret of Navarre's day, no current record of each day's surprising events, she collected all the amazing and terrible and scandalous topics, not of a single day and city, but of an entire country and an entire lifetime. But, the material sold fresh every day on our newsstands makes the "Heptameron" look like a wordy Pollyanna's diary! Condensed in almost any daily newspaper today is a record of crime and immorality that couldn't be equalled in a year of Margaret's time.

The easiest thing in the world to assail and the "smartest" to attack is the Bible and Christian morals because such an attack is sure to shock someone. That's good sales publicity as our disgusted literary critics are now pointing out. "The Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose," said Mr. Shakespeare three hundred years ago; and Mr. Kipling considerably later told of the jackal born in the fall who said the spring freshets were the greatest floods in history. Each new generation delights in rediscovering old scandals—especially scandals and interpretations that help justify licentious be-

havior. We really need something more than personal impressions and prejudice in order to appreciate the truth of the Bible.

Belief Summed Up In Creed

If we honestly crave the truth I believe in looking for the truth, not for the picayune quibbles that blind and confuse us. If we are to throw away the Bible and erase from our minds and the records every impression it has made either directly or through our laws, literature, art and tradition, what work of man can ever fill the gap?

Despite what Hughes has said, my Christian belief is easily summed up in the Apostles' Creed. Let's look at it calmly.

I believe in God. A Supreme Being or the Primal Force or Elementary Principle or even Atomic Energy—no matter how He or It is called, the Supreme Power that created and governs the universe remains the same, immutable, universal, eternal and infinite. Man didn't invent it. It always was. It is. It always must be. Any other conclusion is impossible in logic, because we doubt our intelligence if we doubt this, and that is an absurdity, since the act of doubting is an act of intelligence. "God" is a word which we use to express something infinite. How else express the infinite? Of course we can duck our heads and pretend to ignore it—except for the flicker of an eye when a pictorial magazine reports the sudden arrival of light waves

notifying us of the explosion of a star one thousand years ago. God is Infinite. Who can measure God even in terms of thousands or millions of light-years?

As for the Trinity—God the Father joined with the Son and the Holy Ghost—why not? Christ compared to any other man was certainly Godlike in human terms. Even the bitterest contemporary enemies of what He represented could find no fault in Him. Hughes can go carefully through all the pages of his histories once more and he'll not find a man who ever came anywhere near measuring up to Him, despite the pious efforts of the saints to emulate His conduct. It seems reasonable to me for the Infinite to manifest Himself to mankind by means of translation through a human, understandable, manly and lovable form which observed limitations. If you want a plan for a perfect world, there certainly is a pattern for behavior!

As for the Holy Ghost, that is as good a Name as any other—there are others, of course—for whatever the inexplicable force is which enlightens us by revelation. We all recognize inspiration as an intellectual force. We speak of an inspired army—an inspired people. With due recognition of the limitations of our five puny senses (Do you wear glasses? Or hearing aids? How do you smell if you have a cold?) it is not hard to imagine the existence of a Divine Impulse that may exert a special impulse upon us.

Women Elevated Because Of Mary

In this age when chastity seems to be losing much of its importance, the Virgin Birth appears to be the subject of the most general incredulity. Now, of course, our attitude on this comes from personal experience and understanding. Everyone feels competent to discuss this familiar subject, and every medical student is a cynical expert. Nevertheless, the Immaculate Conception is certainly in the realm of Infinite Power and most of those who deny it to Mary, believe in it in relation to themselves. It is just as well for women to remember that the example of the Blessed Virgin has been the greatest factor in all history towards lifting them from degradation. For this alone, perhaps, her immaculateness, befitting Christ's Mother, was worth while.

I am aware of course that many hold that woman owes her high place to the regard which the ancient Teutons always seemed to hold for womanhood. The fact is, as Taine pointed out, that the whole hope of a woman in the times when the Teutonic races were in the ascendancy, and as yet had been untamed by Christian teaching, was to escape ravishment. It may be true enough to state that the women were loyal to their mates, but it is more nearly correct to say they clung with desperation to them as protectors. Conquered woman had no hope. In the slave market near where now stands the city of

Bristol, England, girls were sold in batches by the conquering Teutons.

Was that only because of the depravity of ancient *uncivilized* people? Well, who will say that the scientific modern pagans who seized control of Germany in our own time have respected the chastity of womanhood? The existence of breeding camps in many parts of Germany has not only been discovered, it was openly proclaimed as an expression of revived paganism. A pertinent commentary on this is that the two hundred orphans in the Nazi breeding camp near Ebersberg were recently taken for adoption by the Catholic Caritas organization of Munich to be raised according to Christian principles. Hughes may feel that it is "bestial" to take these children from their pagan background into a Christian environment. The American Army of Occupation was all for it. And so am I.

Events Historically Established

The trial and crucifixion of Christ have been satisfactorily established historically. Even if it were true that His resurrection rests chiefly on faith, if the premise is correct that He was God and man, it follows logically that the power was in Him to dispose of the body in whatever way might be most edifying to mankind. What the Apostles saw they saw with Apostles' eyes, not with mine. But they witnessed a kind of Transfiguration that obviously strengthened their faith. It must have been convincing.

As for the anthropomorphic conceptions of God, educated Christians do not imagine God to consist of head, limbs, torso and viscera. The form of God cannot be imagined because of course it is formless, since He is a spirit without a body. We simply symbolize Him in as majestic a manner as we can conceive, the intention being to excite in our minds a better appreciation of His attributes, especially as the Father and source of all being. I learned in my catechism when I was about eight years old that the human likeness to God is chiefly in the soul—not a physical family resemblance.

At the same time I learned that the chief torment of the hell which Hughes scoffs at is not in its terrible physical affliction, but in the deprivation of the sight of God for all eternity. This satisfies me. It is possible to deprive myself of the physical sight of all I love in this world by simply closing my eyes and putting a bullet in my head. Why is it not equally possible to kill the soul, so to speak, and thus deprive myself forever of a sight (or comprehension) of the mysterious and appalling power that rules the universe, forever?

Isn't it a reasonable aspiration to wish with an overwhelming desire to comprehend at last the mysteries of life, death and eternity?—to know what it is all about? Wouldn't you like (as an earthly parallel!) to comprehend all there is to know about the atomic force which caused a wheelbarrowful of metal to destroy an entire

city and most of its inhabitants, and which can move a great ship around the world on a handful of matter? Wouldn't you like to understand this clearly without having to acquire the terrifically complex knowledge of Messrs. Einstein, Bohr and Fermi? All will be comprehended in eternity.

Layman Asks: 'Is Man More Creative Than God?'

SOME years ago I ran across the tribe of Watin-dige somewhere near Oldeani, the great game refuge in the heart of Africa which has been thoroughly photographed from the sky with incredibly keen mechanical eyes in an incredible giant mechanical bird, since I skirted it on foot in pursuit of German askaris. Those people talk with clicking sounds like monkeys. They sleep where night finds them, pulling leaves and bushes together for a nest. They are entirely naked. They believe the stars in the sky are lights just overhead almost within jumping distance. The confines of the world as they understand it with their limited knowledge (not limited capacity) can be traversed by a bicycle between dawn and sunset, by an automobile in an hour, by an airplane in minutes; and I have actually passed through their heaven, which is Mt. Mabuguru over which the sun rises. Would any reasonable man expect a missionary endeavoring to enlighten these people, to talk to them of the joys of heaven and the pains of hell in terms of metaphysics? On the other hand, does Hughes seriously believe that an educated Christian means an actual ukelele if he talks of harps in heaven?

No man can reasonably scoff at belief in the existence of a soul and its continuance after death, because it is an instinctive aspiration.

We don't fear death because it hurts. As a rule—from what I have seen of it—it doesn't hurt. Often it is a great release from pain. We fear it because it implies extinction. This fear increases as disbelief in a spiritual survival increases. Don't tell me atheists have less fear of death than true Christians! Old age and disease bring with them a sort of anaesthesia that makes a sufferer, no matter what his belief, contemplate death with indifference. But this is not the same superiority to death that the martyrs felt as they simmered in oil. Hughes may call this indifference to suffering merely self-hypnosis—but if faith can produce such hypnosis, it sounds good to me.

Part Of A Divine Plan

I am satisfied to leave the mystery of the resurrection of the body to God. But if Hughes has seen, as I have seen many times, how industrial chemists bring the dead world to life in mass quantities for the benefit of human society, I cannot see how he or anyone else can find reason to doubt that the infinite power of God can be applied along similar lines.

Let us take, for instance, a piece of coal. Now, what is a piece of coal? It looks to an uneducated child like a meaningless piece of black stone; but we know it is the remains of prehistoric jungles, crushed and compressed by great geological forces. Now let your informed imagination look at those jungles. They once teemed with life. The lush luxuriant vegetation

included foliage, fruit, nuts, flowers—with all the range of fragrance, flavor, color that you can imagine. All that was in those jungles was crushed into black stone—all that fecund, rich and varied life became dead as a stone, black as death! And what do the chemists do with that black stone today? From it by intricate processes they derive an amazing variety of perfumes, flavors, colors—the perfume your wives and sweethearts and daughters buy in little bottles, the flavors you so often enjoy and identify by name in the foods you eat, the whole wide range of beautiful colors you see in fabrics, paintings and wall coverings. How few pause to reflect—even among the chemists themselves—that these are not new creations, but rather the unfolding once more of the fragrance of authentic flowers and herbs, the flavor of authentic fruits and nuts and spices, the colors of authentic foliage in a steaming jungle that flourished perhaps a million years ago—and died and were buried. If chemists can accomplish this physical revival for nothing more than a salary—I have no doubt infinite God can make a better job of it as part of a divine plan.

Over a generation ago Dr. Alexis Carrel took a speck of the heart of an unhatched chick and began to feed it scientifically in order to study the growth of cells. Those cells are still growing. At the Rockefeller Institute recently they became embarrassed at the magnitude of the growth and had to dispose of some of it. The personality of the chick is missing, but the cells

rise daily and might continue so until the end of time though it hardly seems worth while.

Blind Critics Of The Bible

There are several things about critics of the Bible that always puzzle me. One is insistence that a Christian must believe in the verbal inspiration of the Old Testament. Another is that a Christian fixes his entire belief on the words of the New Testament. Must the human brain be so circumscribed that it cannot accept anything beyond a printed account? Do you believe all you read in the newspapers—in the advertisements? I must state positively that I do not believe, in a strictly literal sense, everything contained in the Old Testament. As for the New Testament, I believe it covers only a comparatively small part of Christian belief—and that imperfectly. It is a report sketchily covering only about three years of a life of thirty-three years. Nevertheless, of course, that report is the bulwark of Christian faith.

The form that criticism takes of these two great monuments to social progress is often so inept that I cannot understand why people take the trouble to express it seriously—or if they feel compelled to express it, why they do not first investigate what they intend to criticize. And why, above all, do they so frenziedly go out of their way to assail those who see the obvious good in them?

Hughes, for instance, casts derision on the Biblical story of Genesis. As a man who read

a lot of history books when he was younger, it is fair to demand of him that he point out in the records of any other race than the Semite an outline of creation that comes nearer to the theory of modern geologists and biologists than this first book of the Bible. It recounts that out of chaos came light; that the stars and planets were set in the heavens; that out of the vapors and waters that covered the earth, land emerged, and out of the emerging slime came biological life, finally the ancestors of man, the two sexes in one body, and all creatures in separate species. A rather good account for desert nomads without even a pair of spectacles to help them—and *that over six thousands years ago*, according to that Old Testament chronology.

Need you be reminded that we have just missed being conquered by a modern highly civilized, but pagan, people who believed that their bespectacled and sub-normal monarch was God Himself? These are highly literate scientific people capable of great industrial progress—capable even of manufacturing a death ray!

In this connection, Hughes professed amazement that anyone could be so stupid as to declare there was light before the sun had yet been created. Now, really, isn't that intellectually archaic! Of course his observation was made before there was popular information on what is confined within the atom. But even at that time he might have asked himself: How is a fire started? And answered: Combustible material is set alight. But where is the light before

you strike the match? What is it that lights the little lantern of the hunting fish in the darkness two thousand fathoms below the surface of the sea? What is in the spark that flies from a piece of flint?—or an abrasive wheel? What is it that shines from an electric bulb? Light! And without a sun! Light, in fact, is a vibration that may be entirely independent of the sun—often imperceptible to human eyes or too powerful for human eyes to stand. When we speak intelligently of the Creator we speak of the Infinite—not merely of a tribal god of a planetary system; for not only did He create our sun but other suns and suns whose multitudes are but motes of cosmic dust against infinity—less to Him than electrons are to us in their solar systems within the atom.

Coming Down To Earth!

The sanitary laws of Hebrews are derided. This is really coming down to earth and is quite unimportant. It shouldn't be necessary to remind Hughes that these early people about whom he speaks were nomads who survived long years in the deserts of Sahara and Arabia. I have lived in the desert, and have led fairly large numbers of men through desert wildernesses; and I can state with conviction—sustained by the United States Army and the Marine Corps—that the hygienic laws of the old Jews were usually excellent. If Hughes ate domestic pig in any part of Northeast Africa or Southwest Asia, all his intellectual vigor wouldn't rid him

of the worms that would soon be eating of his body from the inside out. Why even savages know this and regularly (I almost said religiously) take taeniocides to purge themselves. I might add lots of disgusting information on the wisdom of other hygienic laws that would be illuminating, but should be unnecessary. This I may add, though present day conformance in civilized communities to these excellent old laws may not be a necessity it is worthy of respect as an admirable symbol of loyal adherence to a great social tradition.

What seemed most to upset Hughes was the number of personal interviews man had with God in a world still primitive. I can assure him there are millions of people of Semitic origin who are this very day and hour talking to Him in the language of the Bible. As a literary man, I should think he might have supported the use of metaphor and even of hyperbole more generously. Has he never read without comment sentences such as these: "His conscience told him it was wrong"; "Something whispered it is false"; "His duty directed him otherwise"; "Honor said no"; "Justice spoke in no uncertain terms"; "Love bade him linger"; and so on? The Arab and other nomads of northeast Africa and Asia Minor express themselves today in similar fashion, only ascribing most things directly to God. This is so common and obvious a custom that it is almost impossible to write an account or story of these people without fairly frequent use of the name of Allah. Do those who

learn only from their reading suppose this is merely an affectation of adventure story writers? The fact is that an Arab or a Somali Muslim says quiet sincerely, "God appeared to me in a dream last night and directed me to do thus and so"; "I continued as far as the tall grass which was ablaze, and God told me to turn back"; "God saved me from the foolishness"; "We prayed and God led us safely out." You will note that these phrases do not refer to local gods but to Allah! The events recorded in the Bible occurred to just such people. I know a lady who heard her electric iron sing a popular song; it came from a defective radio and was a purely physical experience. But Hughes himself cannot adequately explain the voices that speak from our "sub-conscious" or the origin of impulses that suddenly sway communities and peoples.

Hughes declared that his whole object in deriding the Bible was to seek the truth. I don't know the historic research he did as a young man, but there must have been a deal of pedantry in it; for while he scathingly denounces a literal acceptance of the Bible he denounces it precisely because of his own too literal interpretations! Why pick out in such a work only the apparent discrepancies and inconsistencies? What gain is there in quibbling over the dialect in which God and Moses discussed the Ten Commandments? Behold the Ten Commandments—in any language!

Moderns Have 'Faith' In Everyone Except God

THE great value of the Old Testament seems to me to lie in the fact that it records the development of a faith that for the first and only time in history combined ethics and religion. It clears the darkness and confusion of the varying faiths through which man has sought to reach God much as Darwin's theory cleared the darkness and confusion that distorted biology only a few years ago.

The New Testament is usually criticized by casual skeptics as if it were supposed to have been written by Christ Himself—as if He took pen in hand and wrote an autobiography. A moment's reflection is enough to remind us that every recorded word of Christ is a quoted word, and often enough it is a word quoted at second or third hand. One and a half thousand years and more passed before they appeared in print. The length of time that passed between the crucifixion and the appearance of the portions of the New Testament as Christians now accept them—though the original writings were of the first century—was roughly about as long as from the birth of George Washington until the present time and Mr. Hughes is witness to the fact that we have not had a completely authentic report of the life of George Washington despite voluminous records. Yet Mr. Hughes is contemptuous

because the exact hour of events in the life of Christ is not correctly stated! The writings we have which constitute the New Testament were made by men on the run or in prison or in imminent danger of death. Paul's account of his vicissitudes is sufficiently illuminating. It appears to me amazing that we have any clearness in the record at all; and yet it is so clear that the mere writing of it is an accepted prose classic. Julius Caesar, a near contemporary, employed seven secretaries; he is considered to have been an especially sharp observer and accurate commentator, and we have ample record in Latin of his life and time. His colleagues were intelligent men. Why, then, do we consider him deserving of this reputation when he made such asinine observations as those concerning the unicorn, and yet discredit the writings of the New Testament because of an alleged error of a matter of hours or even of years?

The favorite modern skeptics reply to all this is that we should not believe anything except what is revealed in the pure light of modern science. But what is the pure light of modern science? Before it fully reveals one truth, it must hedge upon the revelation and proceed to another. Scientific progress is no doubt the wonder of the age; and scientists merit all the credit and encouragement we can give them; but where do they point to absolute truth? They have not found truth, of course. They simply believe and search. Christians believe and hope.

But the comprehension of absolute truth must necessarily be beyond reach of our five puny senses.

I agree with the late William J. Bryan, who was so freely derided for his opposition to the teachings of evolution in public schools, to this extent: Most of the developments of modern science should not be taught to children by a lot of badly educated boys and girls who have only the foggiest idea of what it is all about. That kind of teaching is not enlightenment; it's bewilderment. Scientists understand the symbols they themselves employ, and unconsciously they differentiate in their minds among hypotheses, theories, laws; but most normal school graduates with two years training most certainly do not.

A questionnaire was passed among students of a normal school in Wisconsin about the time I first wrote these comments. It contained a list of names which were at that time prominent in the news. The students were asked to explain the meaning of the words. The answers turned in were enlightening to the examiners, but gave small hope of enlightenment for the children these scholars would be teaching within a year. Mussolini became a province; de Valera a Mexican bandit; Dawes an extinct bird; Bohr a village in Normandy; Babe Ruth a movie star—and a lot more were defined with equal absurdity. Yet these same girls a year or so later were to

be among those who resented being told they were insufficiently equipped to teach science.

In my way I also am a seeker after truth, though not exactly along Hughes' lines. I have had a number of conversations with scientists of repute. They are usually specialists, rather irritated at anything that tends to upset their private theories. The relatively few genuine philosophers among them are men of great breadth of vision and tolerant of fresh opinions. They are always learning. But the lesser ones seem to pin their faith to diplomas.

One branch of "modern science" has particularly interested me—criminology. I find that even in this crowded and familiar neighborhood science is embarrassed. There is no strictly scientific definition for crime, because what is crime here is not crime there. A Somali sergeant came to me for leave of absence for the not unusual purpose of going back to Somaliland to kill a man. A Massai brave wants no greater honor than to wear a fringe about his face because to earn that right he must have killed eleven men. In the Danakil country relative values were set upon murders; credit was given for men killed, but it was worth more to kill an elephant since men are such easy prey.

Selling spirituous liquors was recently a crime in the United States for which one unfortunate woman in Michigan was sentenced to life in prison. In Europe it is an honorable trade for which titles of nobility have been granted. Mur-

der has the cachet of society in many parts of Africa; it is condoned in America; and it is atrocious in England. Peculation in public office is considered a serious crime in America; it is an ingrained habit in the Orient. Violent sexual crimes considered bestial now, were joyful rewards of victory in the days of our unregenerate ancestors.

So it would appear there is no scientific basis for good conduct.

For the Christian, however, there is clear definition. He has a moral code which he believes himself obliged to obey to the utmost of his poor weak will even though there are no police to enforce it.

Hughes presented an excellent example of the fallacious statements upon which critics of Christianity base their seemingly plausible arguments in the paragraph wherein he said:

“Nobody honestly believes that Church members are less likely to embezzle, flirt or be brutal than non-church members; or that Christians are more honest than Chinamen. Life is as safe in the African jungle as it is in most Christian cities. This I can state on the testimony of the missionaries themselves. Everybody knows that a man’s creed has nothing whatever to do with his character or his conduct. To deny this is to deny everyday experience.”

The honesty of Chinese has become proverbial

only because it has shone in contrast with the unscrupulousness of early foreign traders (decidedly not Christian, though they sailed under American and European flags) and the speculation of a class of Japanese who at that time were looked upon with scorn by the Japanese themselves. The basis of Chinese mercantile morals is that honesty in the long run is the best business policy. When it is not necessary to be honest Chinese may be wonderfully dishonest. This is so notoriously the case that one of the great difficulties in the establishment of government is that officials will not trust one another with public funds. Under the recent old regime public office was bought and the purchaser wrung the price from the people in exorbitant taxes. This attitude towards other people's money extends right down to servants who take a cut on every purchase, no matter how small, made for their employers. Squeeze, extortion, blackmail are common practices. Christian influence has done more for China in modern times than any other moral force.

It is a common enough thing to sneer at the "mission boy" in China; but for absolute fidelity to a cause you will find few finer examples than the defense of the Pei-Yang cathedral in Peking during the Boxer War by Chinese Christians, armed only with pikes supporting the forty Italian marines who had been sent as a guard before the siege of the Legations had commenced. From the Legation quarter, defended

by the military, most of the pagan Chinese vanished; but in the cathedral compound, hopelessly isolated at the other side of the city, the Christian Chinese did not renounce their loyalty in order to save their skins. On the contrary, they withstood a terrible and incessant siege and were still fighting two days after the Legations had been relieved by the Allied Army. They had resisted every assault and every seduction the Boxers could bring against them, and in the final days were so weak from starvation the men had to be supported, tottering to the walls, by their slightly better nourished wives and sisters and daughters.

At that time Hughes might have found shelter in the safety of a city such as Paotingfu, which is the capitol of a province. Unfortunately the Christians there were marched out under a solemn promise of safe conduct, after giving up their weapons, and then they were all beheaded with variations—children first in the presence of their parents; then wives in the presence of their husbands; then the husbands. Christianity is against that sort of thing.

Hughes, on the other hand, might have offered pagan Japan as a fine country in which to find better than Christian treatment—but he was at that time writing in California, where the idea might not have been sympathetically received. But if he had, what a nice state of confusion he would now be in trying to justify such conduct as the rape of Nanking and the burning of Ame-

rican prisoners and Philippine Christians on Luzon.

He spoke with a convincing air of authority about savage Africa, saying it was as safe as most Christian cities. Now what does he mean by a Christian city? If he means some great American city, his own testimony might contradict him, for he has already said the majority are not Christians. Church-goers, even, are in a minority and of this minority there is a still smaller minority who may truly claim to be Christian. But we might fairly take such a community as Oberammergau, even in Germany, to compare to savage Africa. Oberammergau, you may remember, is where they used to hold the Passion Play. By contrast, let's look at savage Africa.

Cruelty Practiced In Spite Of Christianity

BEFORE the coming of the white man and the white man's law—which is based upon the Bible—before such men as David Livingstone, for instance—almost every part of Africa was the scene of tribal warfare, the most unspeakable tortures, degradation hard to describe, and in many places cannibalism of an appalling sort. The late Mr. Seabrook describes cannibalism of only a few years ago. But even better testimony is in Santie Sabalala's *In Kaffir Kraals*, sketches written by a contemporary Fingo-Kaffir and appearing in American and British publications. Apparently Hughes never heard of the "massacre of the Laager," where about two thousand Boers, old men, women and children—who were trapped away from their men—were literally torn to pieces and subjected to the most abominable brutality by the Zulus. He probably does not know that prisoners of the cannibals were actually kept in pens for fattening, their limbs broken and submerged in water for several days before being killed, in order that the flesh might be more tender for eating. I have myself heard the natives singing an old song of a cannibal cult with the happy refrain: "*This night is your night to bring your son.*" The son was to be the meal! What changed all this? The coming of Christian law. I might also paraphrase Hughes

and say, "It is safer today for a man alone in Africa wherever Christian law prevails than in a great American city where pagans defy the law!"

As a Christian I might resent Hughes' statement that it is "the plain indisputable fact that no other religion ever approached or attempted to approach the unbearable beastliness of Christianity. It almost destroys me to think of it. I could break down and sob with pity for the poor dear people that were caught in those traps of theology," etc. But it is such sophomoric nonsense as an argument against Christianity.

We can be thankful Hughes has distinguished himself more as a writer for the movies than as an historian.

Writers who take this tone have a way of implying that all Europe from the time of St. Peter's arrival in Rome, shortly after the death of Christ, was immediately and thenceforth completely Christian. Every social upheaval, every political catastrophe, perhaps the great plagues and every other abomination that occurred from that time to Napoleon Bonaparte may justifiably be held against Christians and the Christian Church! When this is too obviously unjust it is flung in the face of Spain—because Spain does not speak our language, and therefore answereth not!

How many people realize that the inhabitants of the northern and western part of Europe at the time of St. Peter's appearance in Rome were

not merely barbarians, but were virtually savages? Their religion was druidical and their priests tore the reeking hearts from human sacrifices under the oaks in vast impenetrable forests. They lived in mud hovels, roughly thatched. Caesar's soldiers were horrified and almost broke ranks in terror at sight of the giants who came out of the German forests. In the wolf-infested wilderness, these blond giants built rough lodges of mud and stones and timber, and there they drank themselves into drunken rages—went beserk with the blood lust. Teuton, Gaul, Celt, Pict, Briton—in a dark world of gnarled dripping forests, gray wintry skies and storm-swept seas—they tore at each other's throats like predatory animals. No economic necessity forced them to war. They gloried in slaughter! The Roman legions tried desperately to tame them until Varus' legions were annihilated in the German wilderness and the bloody flood overflowed across the Alps.

With the Roman civilization penetrating in thin streams went the first few Christians, walking in sandals and bare feet. But Rome's efforts were smashed in the confusion among these barbarians. Into this confusion of European barbarism came the ravenous rush of Turks and of Huns and Mongols. Race piled on race, slashing and conquering, observing no enduring law but the law of might. None survived but the strong. Imagine the hates, the prejudices, the insatiable passions of these people! Imagine the social

chaos when all social problems were resolved by the cross-bow, the broad-sword and the torch! Christianity prayed for order and for peace. What did pagan barbarians reply? At Scarborough one Jute, single-handed, slew eighty unarmed monks. This was regarded as a tremendous jest. But consider what struggling Christianity was up against! The Dark Ages rolled over it.

For some incomprehensible reason the Dark Ages or the Middle Ages are often referred to as evidence of the corruption and weakness and superstition of the Christian church, when, of course, the reverse is the case; for the Dark Ages passed because something mysterious had happened to barbarism. Christianity had not been murdered; instead it had actually tamed the murderers of Roman civilization! Professor Hutchins, of Chicago University, believes that our modern age must look to the Dark Ages to receive the *light* it now needs.

Turning to the other side of the world, Hughes refers to the writings of Las Casas for evidence of this "beastliness" of Christianity in the New World. As it happens, this is an example in still another land excellently illustrating my point.

Las Casas wrote extensively of the cruelties imposed upon the Indians by the early Spaniards. He himself came to Hispaniola not long after Columbus. He was ordained priest in San Domingo; and, conceiving a great horror of the cruelty of Indian slavery, he returned to Spain

to intercede with the king on the Indians' behalf. The king having died, the regents, Cardinals Ximenes and Hadrian approved of what he asked and created the office of Protector of the Indians for him. It is impossible to follow his career here in detail; but years later he actually succeeded in getting drastic laws drawn in favor of the Indians. The outcry against them was so loud that the Viceroy in Mexico did not dare enforce them and they caused Pizarro to rebel against them in Peru! Las Casas nevertheless was, in the end, made Bishop of Chiapas. Perhaps he exaggerated in his reports because he was doing his best to arouse horror against cruelty to the Indians. Hughes would give the impression that the horrors were imposed by Christian teaching, that Christianity was responsible for it, when his mere statement of the case proves that the true Christian was opposing un-Christian conduct with the utmost ardor, actually supported by Cardinals in Spain! Anyone with sense knows that the natives of Spanish-America were exploited for gold. It was a land colonized largely by ruthless adventurers. You will look far in Mexico before you find a statute glorifying Cortez! But because few of us read Spanish, we are narrow-minded enough to accept the writings and traditions of Englishmen, at a period when all England hated Spain with an enduring hatred, as presenting the facts of the case.

Nevertheless, the arrival of the Spaniards, in-

evitably bringing with them Christian missionaries, broke up the Aztec and Toletc civilizations and religions—"those poor dear people" who offered up yearly—according to Prescott, an historian somewhat more highly regarded than Hughes—twenty thousand human sacrifices. You may see the sacrificial stones when you take a tour in your car to Mexico. The blood in them speaks. Anyone with imagination may picture how the victims were pressed back in a bow, their hearts cut out with obsidian knives, their bodies flung down the scarp, the hearts retained to be eaten, while the carved stone channels of the high places flowed with human gore.

Christianity changed that. Christianity has, in fact, changed the whole face of the world, and for the better, in the unending struggle against injustice and evil. I'm for it. I've looked along the deep perspectives of history; I've walked and talked with men of every breed, with kings indeed and crawling beggars; I have lived in war and famine, pestilence and prosperity; I'm familiar with the petty arrogance of bureaucrats, the unhappy querulousness of labor, the silly pride of unmerited wealth, the cruel wanton hatred of stupidity. And recently here in Washington I have been in a veritable Sargasso Sea of better plans for better living—which is wonderful because it makes so clear that there never has been conceived by man a better plan than this simple Christian precept:

"Love your neighbor as yourself . . .

And God above all things.'

The United Press, reporting from Nuremberg, March 20th, 1946, said that Rudolf Hoess, confessed killer of 2,500,000 persons, was responsible for the deaths of another 2,000,000 Nazi victims after he left the German horror camp at Auschwitz in southern Poland.

"With 4,500,000 deaths to his 'credit,' Hoess is probably history's outstanding murderer," said the report. "Asked if he believed in God, the former Auschwitz commandant said, 'Most emphatically no!'"

To a Christian the question seems superfluous.



