

whose divine inspiration was once never questioned. As the peoples have been increasingly knit together and race-superiority notions have lost their potency, it has become obvious that one's beliefs, however fervently held, are most frequently determined by the place where one was born. In India a Hindu, in China a Buddhist, in Arabia a Mohammedan, in Europe a Christian of one sect or another — who is to say which is right? There is no dogmatism among those who have rid themselves of national prejudices and make a study of comparative religion.

Nevertheless, the believer asks incredulously: What will you put in the place of God?

Is it so difficult to answer simply; man's faith in himself?

Consider our history. There may be some truth in George Bernard Shaw's suggestion in *Caesar and Cleopatra*, that our progress is often over-stated and that in the very act of thrusting off one set of chains we are busily forging ourselves a new set. Much of the disappointment (sometimes misnamed disillusionment) of people with their own kind arises from a naive expectance of too much achievement within too short a time. Once this childish search for a chocolate house is cast aside, we are astonished by the spectacle of achievement that has been reached and is still being reached — sometimes with such rapidity that the work of centuries is compressed into a matter of years. Our science overwhelmingly supports the belief that modern man, with his delicate culture and science, has arisen in recognisably human form and matured within no more than half a million years. Man sets himself only such problems as he can solve, and in the long run he has not failed to solve them. The process has taken many centuries of bitter and stubborn effort. But should we, who today have so many more means at our command when we confront our difficulties, give up where our brute ancestors toiled stubbornly and half-blindly on?

*Man was made for joy and woe;
And when this we rightly know,
Thro' the world we safely go.
Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine . . .*

WILLIAM BLAKE

There are many who, loving life and their fellows very dearly (or, by reverse, lacking any true satisfaction), look for a final solution to a belief in immortality. If man makes himself, and Heaven is no more than a projection of his ideal world free from pain

and conflict, they feel that this hope is gone. What, then, can take the place of life after death?

It is easy to point to the illogicalities of the commonly-held concepts of personal survival. For who is immortal? Humans only? Many a dog or a horse has been loved as a child, and has shown a human-like intelligence and devotion. If such are admitted, why not birds? fishes? insects? In short, a reproduction of the material world? Or, if humans only have a heaven, which humans? All of us, regardless of faith or unbelief, righteousness or sin? Such a concept would deny the whole basis of ethics. But if only the righteous have a heaven, what of those who are born idiots or who die as babies, never knowing good from evil? And if those who embrace the faith are alone admitted, what of those who have never heard of the faith? Even the doctrine of reincarnation does not resolve this dilemma, for it allows only for the deeds which men choose to do, not for conditions for which they are individually responsible and which must influence their character and their behaviour.

But doubtless such logic is beside the point. To those who long for another life, faith can move mountains; and we must probe deeper for an answer.

Why should I, as an individual human being, desire to persist? I, who share my days with my family, my friends, a multitude of other persons seen or unseen, the natural world with its trees, flowers, birds, its perfumes and its sounds — why should I wish to attain or even conceive a life, however idyllic, in which I would exist apart from these things?

The answer is simply that I will do so if there is some sense of incompleteness which cannot be expressed in any other way. If I once feel myself to be intensely or hopefully a part of human society — not rejecting or minimising my individuality, but prizing and developing it as a special contribution shared by my fellows — then there is no longer room or desire for personal survival. Death holds its sting, but not its fears. It is as natural as birth, and there is no more terror in realising that a time will come when I exist no more, than there is in contemplating that time when I was not yet alive. There is principally a regret that my work must cease before ever I can see the next instalments of this marvellous serial story!

My physical body in decay will nourish new life. My actions, my thoughts in their daily expression, having influenced those who have known me, will swell the pool of experience from which future generations will be refreshed. A man or a woman or a little child may die, but so long as life flourishes on this planet the people is immortal.

AUCKLAND: THE PELORUS PRESS

Is there an answer without religion

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BY ELSIE LOCKE

Reprinted from "Here & Now"

August 1951

Price Twopence

This pamphlet is obtainable from the Rationalist Association, 315 Victoria Arcade, Shortland Street, Auckland C.1; from Progressive and Modern Bookshops; and from the Co-operative Bookshop, New Regent Street, Christchurch, where quantity orders will be received at 1/4d per dozen copies.

A WORLD POPULATION of 2000 million can survive only by abolishing crises, eliminating waste, expanding production, making the desert blossom and the ocean surges yield up their treasure—above all, by throwing off the terrible burden of war and preparations for war.

In our patently crazy times there are many people, intelligent, sensitive and humane, who cannot perceive any compass by which man can steer his way through such colossal dangers. It appears to them that man's scientific and technical achievements have outrun his moral power to use them advantageously and wisely. Forgetting that it is impossible to come out of barbarism without carrying the mark of the beast, they turn away in despair from movements which, though generally progressive, appear not to be free from some crude or ugly aspect. They are afraid of positive action in the conflicts of our time, lest they err, or cause some concomitant harm; not realising that inertia can also be an open gate to evil, and that activity which fails has at least the merit of enriching our experience. They may even lack the courage to change the ideals and the standards to which they have been attached, even though they can no longer be satisfied by them. Or perhaps, coming from among those who in the past have been privileged, secure and prosperous, they are dismayed and bewildered by the challenge which other classes or nations, formerly regarded as inferior or barbarian, are hurling at their way of life.

Such people are oppressed by their helplessness, and, lacking any acceptable guide, turn away from man's obligation to grapple with his destiny and say: There is only one God; let us submit ourselves to God.

To many Christians this must appear a humble admission of man's inadequacy and a sincere acceptance of divine guidance. Yet is it not a poor recognition of what they deem to be God's handiwork, that this race of men whom they believe He created with free choice between good and evil, should in this extremity reject the choice and throw the responsibility back upon their Creator?

I know that I must touch gently upon the dearly-held, tender and mystical beliefs of other people, wherever and wherever they may be. I respect everything that springs from the wells of human character and spirit. I look out upon the grassy earth which is the only creator I personally can acknowledge, and I know my kinship with those whose way of thought is different from mine. And I cannot pursue the search to the end without pushing open the gates of this much-forbidden realm.

The mass of men, since the dawn of consciousness, have believed in the Gods. Like children, they knew not whence they came. Life in forest, on plain

and by seashore, was enveloped in wonders beyond explanation; the terror of the lightning, the gifts of springtime and harvest, the beauty of clouds at sunset, the majesty of the sun. All primitive religions have a multiplicity of deities, to be worshipped or implored or placated according to their supposed role. We who know many things about lightning and sunshine and the cycle of the seasons may smile indulgently at such notions, not realising fully that by so projecting their fear and their wonder, our forefathers were better able to cope with their world and gain mastery of their most urgent problems. Is not this awe before the unexplained, the magnificent and the mysterious a continuing factor in all great religions? More, does not modern religion assert that there are many things which man cannot know, should not aspire to know, and can never influence or control, because they are God's province?

But the human animal, struggling to separate himself from the beasts 'that nourish a blind life within the brain' had other needs. He must not only believe in superior beings responsible for those things beyond his comprehension: he must also, puny and ambitious as he was, believe in himself. Beset by enemies far brawnier, faced afresh each day with his problem of subsistence, seeking a harmony within his own herd which would permit it to compete with rival tribes, he learned to project a Being in whom these conflicts were firmly and completely resolved. The fearsome and competing primitive gods gave way before One, a Father of all. God was created in the image of man—not as he was, but as he would like to be.

Man longed for rest and for peace; but to labour, to wrest his bread from the earth by the sweat of his brow, and to defend it against all comers, was a law of his life. Moreover, as the struggle for existence eased with the development of agriculture and the domestication of animals, his society began to divide within itself. The stronger or the more astute learned to live better by appropriating to themselves the fruits of others' labour, and this was actually fruitful in its turn, for their strength and cleverness benefited the whole tribe. Thus would be founded a privileged class at first beneficial, but with the passing of time and the discovery of new techniques becoming outmoded and parasitical. Slave-owner and slave, feudal lord and serf, captain of industry and wage-worker—whatever the form, divisions within society have extended down through civilised history and have in turn assisted and hindered the advance. The poor ye have always with you, said Jesus. However man longed for unity, there was always separation, the submerged tenth, the underdog.

Again the contradiction between hard reality and

man's longing brought forward its projected solution. Not slave and freeman on this earth, but a Heaven in which all men were free (not merely of other men, but of the very necessity for food and raiment) gave hope and comfort to the poor, and solace to the rich and powerful who were ashamed of their privilege. The duality of heaven and earth was no more than the duality of dominant and subject class, of desire and reality.

Yet there was more in his religion than comfort and hope, mystery and wonder. Man needed to regulate his conduct with his fellow-men. These rules which most benefited his society required some greater emphasis than mere aphorisms or instructions. They needed consecration. Ethical principles rooted deep in social need received the sanction of religion. They were the commands of God. Moses went up on to the mountain and returned with the tablets.

Especially in past centuries, when the universe was so inexplicable that only a God could seem to be the answer, wise and good men have contributed to this process of writing into their religion the finest thoughts, and the deepest aspirations, and the most subtle aesthetics. Why do I, an unbeliever, share with my religious friends a feeling of calm and sublimity upon hearing the music of Bach? Why do I find in *Paradise Lost* a great epic whose message transcends its theology? Why do I respond to the majesty of a cathedral, or to the tenderness of a Madonna and Child? Because the thoughts and emotions which inspired these masterpieces, though religious in form, are essentially human in content, aiming at the heart's depth of every one who has faith and love and compassion for his fellow-men.

Man's religion has grown with his society. Whenever a changing situation required new laws—a moral revival to blend with a social upsurge—then a new religion or a revision of the old was bound to arise. Thus every new doctrine is revolutionary and is, for a time, persecuted by the ruling authority. The followers of Jesus, with a courage unsurpassed in man's courageous history, flouted the temporal power of Rome. Luther and the martyrs of the reformation cared nothing for the power of kingdoms. But there comes a time when the social change of which religious change is one expression has been sufficiently completed. Then the new religion is adopted by the Emperor Constantine or by the Tudor monarchy; it becomes respectable; it is now not only a faith and an ethic, but an institution, a part of the arsenal of the now dominant classes.

Today not only can we study the universe and the laws which regulate it, we have also learned much about the origins and functions of those very religions