

such a highly complex mental organization as the religious sentiment. For this reason the first apparently religious responses of the child are not religious at all, but wholly social in character. They consist at first of trifling habits such as bowing the head or folding the hands, and soon after of learning to repeat simple prayers or hymns. To the child these acts are as routine as brushing the teeth or shaking hands, or any other of the pointless habits required of him by his well-meaning but trying parents. The rituals are learned but not their significance. One child of four had been accustomed to say his nightly prayers before a religious picture. One day he went visiting, and when at night he was bidden to say his prayers he found no picture available. Going to the table he provided himself with the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* before which, with complete satisfaction, he performed his devotions. And the words of the prayer he said had essentially no different significance for him than the words of his nursery rhymes.

The child's ideas take the best form they can in view of his frail capacity and the scant store of experience at his command. Inevitably his ideas are marked by the egocentricism normal at this stage of life. It could not be otherwise, for every perception and every feeling revolve around the child's growing sense of selfhood. At first he cannot separate thought and feeling from the reality of the external world. By thinking things he makes them happen. Conjuring up the image of a bear, he grows terrified at its menacing appearance. Furthermore, whatever happens is taken to have special reference to himself. Piaget tells how the young child sometimes believes that the sun exists for no other reason than to follow him wherever he goes, in order to see whether he is naughty or good. Many children think a thunderstorm is put on for their own special punishment, just as they think that Santa Claus, whom they often equate with God, pays primary

attention to their own private interests. Tommy, at the age of five, entered a church with his mother and noticed the cross upon the altar. "What's that?" he inquired. "A cross," whispered his mother. "Red Cross?" he asked. "No, just a cross." "Oh, I know," said the boy, "T for Tommy." It will be many years before Tommy will be capable of understanding the reverse interpretation of the symbol—that it represents "the I, crossed out."

Kupky tells of an interesting instance of egocentric rationalization in connection with a youthful religious conflict. A boy, reared under stern theology, felt that it was sinful for him to push his wheelbarrow boisterously around the yard, a pastime that he loved above all others. To escape his feelings of guilt he imagined the child Jesus to be, like himself, six years old, and placing Him considerably in the barrow romped with Him endlessly in mutual delight.¹

Another manifestation of egocentricism lies in the child's insistence that his every "Why?" be answered. If the adult cannot or will not oblige, he calls upon his own inventions, for he is incapable of admitting that in certain matters "one cannot know." The result is that in the child's religion grotesque fantasies abound. Piaget points out that even when the adult supplies an answer it is frequently only partially heard and inaccurately comprehended. Difficult words in the reply slip by and the child takes only the familiar words which he then weaves into a meaning of his own.² One lad, hearing that God was high and bright, assumed that the weathercock on the barn must be God, for it was the highest and brightest object he knew. Another, hearing that God was sometimes angry, decided that the stars were caused by the deity who

¹ O. Kupky. *The Religious Development of Adolescents*, New York: Macmillan Co., transl. by W. C. Trow, 1928, p. 29.

² J. Piaget. *The Language and Thought of the Child*, New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., transl. 1932, p. 152.

in his moments of wrath punched his cane through the sky thus letting the light of heaven seep through.

Since he can imagine strength far beyond the limits of his own puny abilities, the child almost inevitably develops ideas of power and energy in connection with the deity. His parents are powerful, but God is more so, outdoing even Superman, who in this age of comics, is an unsuspected factor in many children's religious training. Youngsters sometimes evolve their religious concepts in connection with electric storms, a time when fear and helplessness are combined with a sensory manifestation of power.

A further characteristic of the child's early religious concepts is his *anthropomorphism*. How could it be otherwise, since within his world of experience powerful and loving agents are people? Furthermore, he is usually taught that God is, in fact, a male personage. With few exceptions, therefore, children visualize God as an old man, or as a rich man, superman, or king.³ And, frequently, though not as universally as Freud makes out, God possesses the attributes of the physical father.

Even while the child's mind is spinning in a welter of *ego-centrism*, *magical thought*, and *anthropomorphism*, it is being exposed to contrary pressures from the adult environment. The standardized theology and morality of his culture slowly seep through and gradually replace some of the self-centered thinking. A six-year-old boy exemplifies this transitional process. Under manifest personal strain he suddenly refused to say "Our Father." The reason he gave was that God, presumably good, could not be like his earthly father, a drunkard and renegade. The lad had not yet shifted from the concrete imagery of early childhood to the more abstract conception appropriate to later life.

³ Cf. Kupky. *Op. cit.*, pp. 30-33.

Social learning is a very subtle process. What is taught turns out in the long run to be less important than the manner of teaching. Quite apart from the content of his lessons, the child gains an indelible impression of the sincerity of his parents. Their tone of voice, their example in daily living, are not lost upon the child, even though it may be years before he fully recognizes and appreciates their deepening piety. Insincerity is perceived as easily as is sincerity, though again it may not be known for what it is until years have elapsed. There is considerable evidence to show that the most religious-minded adults were raised by parents who themselves were deeply religious. It is not that children of pious parents always accept the doctrinal position in which they were trained. Very often they rebel against parental orthodoxy, and yet the sincerity of their parents' outlook has profoundly influenced them. When their own worldly supports break down, they are more likely than not to find their parents' philosophy of life a desirable, though not necessarily a detailed, model to follow.

In the years preceding puberty additional influences are brought to bear on the developing sentiment. For one thing, the child usually encounters grave disappointments and deprivation, and he finds his self-centered prayers, however intense, unavailing. His sick puppy is not spared; the new sled does not come for Christmas. To take this hurdle, and to revise one's views of Providence, passing from self-interest to self-interestedness, is extremely difficult. Many individuals, finding religion no magical aid in this early period, once and for all drop it. An offsetting influence upon development comes from the maturing intelligence which now is able to comprehend somewhat more adequately the abstractions taught at home and in church. The child's theology gradually begins to approximate that of his elders. And normally there is in the pre-puberty period an intense desire to identify with

the in-group. Religious practices, if such occur in the family, are taken for granted; and the institutional membership of the parents is rarely questioned. The child asks, "What are we?" and learning that "we" are Presbyterians, requires no further authority for the superiority of Presbyterianism. He fights, if necessary, in its defense, and may go so far as to tear Catholic hair out of Catholic heads, unless given concurrent training in tolerance.

Adolescence

Usually it is not until the stress of puberty that serious reverses occur in the evolution of the religious sentiment. At this period of development the youth is compelled to transform his religious attitudes—indeed all his attitudes—from second-hand fittings to first-hand fittings of his personality. He can no longer let his parents do his thinking for him. Although in some cases the transition is fluent and imperceptible, more often there is a period of rebellion.

Various studies show that for approximately two-thirds of all children there is a reaction against parental and cultural teaching.⁴ Approximately half the rebellions come before the age of sixteen and half later. In general the time of insurrection is appreciably earlier for girls than for boys. It takes many forms. Sometimes the youth simply shifts his allegiance to a religious institution different from his parents'. Or he may reach a satisfying rationalism from which religious considerations are forever after eliminated. Sometimes, when the first shadows of doubt appear, he gives up the whole problem and drifts into the style of life, said to be character-

⁴ Cf. E. D. Starbuck, *Psychology of Religion*, London: W. Scott Co., 1899, p. 232; also G. W. Allport, J. M. Gillespie, J. Young, The religion of the post-war college student, *Journal of Psychology*, 1948, 25, 3-33.

istic of modern youth, of opportunism and hedonism. Occasionally the storm arises not because of intellectual doubts, but because of a gnawing sense of guilt and shame, due perhaps to sex conflicts. Infrequent in the present day are the crises precipitated within evangelical sects which insist upon the necessity for conversion, for a "day of decision."

No subject within the psychology of religion has been more extensively studied than conversion. Various facts are fairly well established. One is that the average age for conversion, like that for the rejection of parental systems of belief, is sixteen, although there is evidence that in recent years the trend is toward an earlier age.⁵ One suspects that the impact of movies and radio has sharpened the emotional susceptibilities of children, so that the blandishments of evangelists, if responded to at all, are effective at an earlier age than formerly. We also know that the frequency of conversion experiences varies with cultural conditions. Children in rural areas and in families holding a stern theology are more susceptible than are city children, especially those associated with churches that practice confirmation. Finally, the frequency of abrupt conversions is certainly less today than it was fifty years ago.⁶ In the time of our grandparents it was not uncommon for whole families to attend revival camp-meetings and to return home with the adolescents formally converted.

Three forms of religious awakening are commonly distinguished, the first being the *definite crisis*, or conversion experience. Of a large group of contemporary college students who reported some form of religious awakening, 14 per cent acknowledged conversion experiences. Fifteen per cent

⁵ S. L. Pressey, J. E. Janney, R. G. Kuhlen. *Life: A Psychological Survey*, New York: Harper & Bros., 1939, p. 422.

⁶ E. T. Clark. *The Psychology of Religious Awakening*, New York: Macmillan, 1929, pp. 50, 87.

reported the second, or *emotional stimulus*, type of awakening, wherein the upheaval is slight or absent, but wherein, nonetheless, the subject is able to designate some single event which served as the effective stimulus to his religious re-orientation. Taking these two types together, we have 29 per cent who report that some traumatic or semi-traumatic event underlay their religious development. The remainder of our cases, 71 per cent, report a gradual awakening, with no specifiable occasion being decisive.

Where there has been some marked turn or vivid experience we usually discover consequences of a lasting, and often permanent order. This is not to say that backslidings fail to occur; on the contrary backslidings normally follow any strenuous moral experience. The veil is drawn again after all moments of rapture.⁷ But the significance of the definite crisis or emotional stimulus lies in the hunger it arouses, and in the charting of a direction of search for appeasing this hunger. Almost always the individual who has once experienced a vividly religious state of mind seeks throughout his life to recapture its inspiration.

The self-told stories of adolescent religious experience are extraordinarily diverse. Some youths find that religious conviction flares into being overnight; they are amazed to discover that it has taken so violent a hold upon them. Some report the solemn impression made by confirmation or by first communion. Many linger on the dark side of things, and report that for them the religious sentiment is always pensive. Many, perhaps most, experience wavering faith, with peaks of exaltation and troughs of despair. The feeling of alienation from parent and church is common. Moral judgments are often harsh and positive, whether directed toward others or toward oneself. The adolescent is often a moral absolutist and believes that a God must exist in order to guarantee the

⁷ Cf. W. James. *Op. cit.*, pp. 252 f.

moral values to which he holds. Bereavements and suffering call attention to evil and injustice, and often kindle flames of consuming doubt, or else increase the religious urge, and hasten the development of a religious solution to the problem of evil.

As it grows, the religious sentiment overlaps and blends with other sentiments. The youth who falls in love finds that the exalted selflessness of this state is not unlike the mystical experience he may have in his religious moments. Romantic ideals of accomplishment may occupy his mind, and his ambition may merge with a religious longing to embrace the whole universe. Intense feelings always overflow the boundaries of single sentiments and saturate the personality in all its regions. Art may become an adolescent passion, and youth often finds that religion is only art transposed to a higher key, for like art it seeks to unify and harmonize that with which it deals. But while art unifies within tiny frames of space, religion works within the proscenium of the firmament. Kopy's study of the experience of reverence among adolescents showed that it is most frequently evoked by the stirring beauties of nature.⁸ For many adults, as well as adolescents, the aesthetic sense and the religious sense are continuous.

In the American Protestant culture perhaps the most significant influence upon religious development is the fact that youth is normally encouraged to question authority. He is expected, if not by his family, at least by his college and by his contemporaries, to scrutinize critically all established ways of looking at things. He is not only permitted but actively encouraged to find flaws in the school, in the home, in the social system, in the church.⁹ For fully two centuries the

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁹ One study shows that such questionings are normally associated with considerable conflict if a youth has been reared in the Roman Catholic faith. Cf. C. W. Heath, *et al.* *What People Are*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945.

church has been the favorite target of criticism. At its expense wit and reason have been sharpened. Against the convenient ground of orthodoxy countless scientists, philosophers, humanists have displayed to advantage their own brilliant wares. The fashion of the times therefore encourages youth to join the attackers rather than the defenders. Finally, to reject the church of the parent is one way of stepping forth as an independent adult in a culture where the child is expected to outstrip his parents in occupational, social, and educational accomplishments.

College Students

We are now in a position to understand a few facts and figures obtained from a sample of the present generation of college students. The population studied consists of 414 Harvard undergraduates, over two-thirds of them veterans of World War II, and 86 Radcliffe undergraduates. Our results may not be typical for all American youth, certainly not for the youth of other nations. The sample, however, is representative for the two colleges in question, and probably not seriously out of line with the large population of ambitious and intelligent young men and young women now crowding our institutions of higher learning.¹⁰ The material

¹⁰ Recent unpublished replications of our work suggest that our findings do in fact hold surprisingly well for several diverse college populations.

The subjects constituted a virtually complete sample of students enrolled at Harvard and Radcliffe in a course on the "Social and Psychological Foundations of Behavior," during the fall term, 1946-47. The questionnaire was introduced as a part of the program of experiments and demonstrations in the course, and was filled out by the students at their leisure. Nearly every copy was returned. A separate publication presents the questionnaire in full, together with the detailed results which are merely summarized in this chapter; cf. G. W. Allport, J. M. Gillespie, J. Young. *Op. cit.*

was gathered by means of a questionnaire—the traditional but far from perfect method employed in the study of religious sentiments.

The pivotal question in this study reads as follows: "Do you feel that you require some form of religious orientation or belief in order to achieve a fully mature philosophy of life?" This question does not define "religious orientation," but leaves the student free to say whether or not such an orientation, in any sense at all, has a reasonable and necessary place in the economy of his life. To this question seven out of every ten students give an affirmative reply. It would be definitely incorrect to assume that seven in ten are theists, or church-goers, or traditionalists. We can say only that, given an opportunity to define religion in any way at all, seven out of ten students regard themselves as actually or potentially religious.

Looking first at the individuals giving a negative reply, that is, those who do not feel the need of some religious orientation in their lives, what do we discover? For one thing, males are more often in this category than females. Whereas 82 per cent of the women students report need for a religious orientation, the corresponding figure among non-veteran men is 76 per cent, and among veterans 64 per cent. It is common in all studies to find women more interested in religion however defined. They are more often the church-goers, more often devout in their personal lives, and more often the family mentors in matters of religion. But it is well to guard against exaggerating this finding, for the measured differences between the sexes seldom exceed 20 per cent.

Besides sex difference and war experience (which I shall later discuss), the age factor turns out to be important. Young men of twenty or under more often feel the need of a religious orientation than do their fellow students who are twenty-one or over. There is good reason to suppose that on

the average the early and middle twenties are, in fact, the least religious period of life. It is then that the alienation from the parental codes has become complete. It is then also that youth feels most secure in pursuing his life ambition. He has not yet had the rude shock that comes to nearly all adults when they first realize that their abilities and probable accomplishments are, after all, not likely to equal their aims and pretensions. In the early twenties the youth, as a rule, has not yet married a wife who, by the law of averages, will be more religious than he is. Nor has he yet undertaken the training of children. When he does so he will probably want them to have the benefit of religious influence which is part of the cultural heritage. Nor, in the early and middle twenties has he yet developed sufficient perspective upon his own upbringing to appreciate the sincerity and piety that may have marked his parents' attitudes. It is often in the thirties that people first decide the parental model is, after all, not a bad one to follow. The old folks now seem to have been acting as wisely as they could have done in the face of life's mysteries and difficulties.

Let us look next at the influences of childhood upbringing upon those who deny the need for a religious orientation in their lives. First we note that religious influence upon children is by no means a thing of the past as it is often thought to be. In 19 per cent of our cases religion is reported to have been a "very marked" influence in upbringing, in 42 per cent a "moderate" influence, in 33 per cent "slight," and in less than 7 per cent non-existent. Now students who report religion to have been a marked or even a moderate influence are much more likely to express the need for a religious orientation. If the influence is reported to have been slight or non-existent, the need is less often felt. But there are striking exceptions: some who report "marked influence" are sharp in their reaction against it. And, on the other hand,

a third of those who had "no influence at all" yet develop a sense of present need. It is well to be clear about the role of upbringing. No single psychological or environmental factor is as important in creating a need for religion as is early training, and yet this factor is not decisive. As I have just said, a third of our students who report no influence in their upbringing at all, yet somehow have developed a religious proclivity.

Turning to the *kind* of religious upbringing that surrounded our students we discover additional facts of interest. Among those who were reared in the Roman Catholic faith (15 per cent of our total sample) nearly all now report a need for some religious orientation in their lives. At the other extreme are those who were brought up in some form of Judaism or in liberalized Protestantism (defined in our questionnaire as including Unitarianism and Universalism). Fully 40 per cent of the youth raised under either of these forms of faith fail to regard the religious sentiment as a necessary component in their personalities. We note, however, that these two faiths, as contrasted with the Roman Catholic, were, by and large, regarded as "slight" rather than as "marked" influences, and so we are unable to determine whether it may not, after all, be the *degree* of influence rather than the *kind* that is decisive. Were Unitarians, let us say, required to attend church every Sunday, and to participate as actively in religious practices, their children might develop a religious hunger as frequently as do the Catholic children.

One final fact concerning the third of our cases who do not feel the need for religious orientation in their lives: they did not, by any means, all give an unequivocally negative answer to our question. About 38 per cent of them said they were "doubtful" about the whole matter. Hence, out of the total student sample, actually only 18 per cent replied positively that for them maturity of personality requires no re-

ligion. We are led back then to our primary conclusion, namely that in the large majority of these students' lives, even in this age of technology and social disintegration when skepticism hangs heavy upon the horizon—even today the disposition of youth to seek *some* kind of religion is apparent.

Among those who allow the religious sentiment a place in their lives, what influences do they themselves feel to underlie their sense of need? Taking the factors they mention in order of frequency, we find *parents* designated in 67 per cent of the cases, and *other human beings* in 57 per cent. Thus the factor of personal influences looms largest. Next comes *fear*, mentioned by 51 per cent of these students. The *church* is recognized as a specific influence by 40 per cent, and *gratitude* (an emotion generally neglected in our social life) by 37 per cent. There follow *aesthetic appeals* and *reading*, in about a third of the cases. Then comes the pressure of sheer *conformity* with tradition, acknowledged by 27 per cent. Studies influenced one-quarter, and *sorrow* or *bereavement* 18 per cent of the cases. A *mystical experience*, something not fully understood, was reported by 17 per cent, and the ravages of *sex turmoil* by 16 per cent. The lesson we learn from this survey is that the psychological roots of the religious sentiment—even those that can be consciously reported—are very numerous, and that for one who is religiously inclined almost any type of experience can be, and will be, redacted into the channel of the growing sentiment.

Next we inquire how the religious views of these students compare with their parents' views. The question was asked, "How in general does the firmness of your belief in religion compare with your mother's belief?" Only 8 per cent thought their beliefs were more firm than their mothers', whereas half thought they were less firm. The remainder felt they were about the same, or else did not know. In all probability three causes contribute to this result. There is, first of all, the sex

difference. The majority of our cases are male, and religious interests, as we know, are on the average less strongly developed in men than in women. There is likewise the age difference. With passing years the intensity of the religious sentiment in the son or daughter will in some cases equal or surpass the mother's. Finally, there is undoubtedly a residual influence of genuine secularization. The present generation probably does manifest less firmness of structure in the religious sentiment than did the parental generation. The students also reported that their beliefs are, on the whole, less firm than their fathers' beliefs. Here the interesting facts emerge that fathers are regarded as considerably less religious than mothers, and that twice as many students profess to be ignorant of the strength of their fathers' faith as of their mothers'. It seems that sons and daughters find it relatively more difficult, in religious matters, to learn where their fathers stand.

Now we come to a most striking finding in our comparison of generations. The students who expressed a need for some religious orientation were asked whether on the whole the tradition of one of the following great religious systems seemed satisfactorily to meet their need: Roman Catholicism, Anglo-Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestant Christianity, liberalized Christianity (defined as including Unitarianism, Universalism), an ethical but not a theological Christianity (defined as including humanism, ethical culture), some form of Judaism, or some other which they were allowed to specify. As a further alternative they were permitted to say that "a substantially new type of religion is required." They were also asked to indicate the character of the religious influence that prevailed in their own upbringing, the same system of classification being used. From the responses thus obtained it is possible to characterize the shifts in allegiance that have occurred. It turns out that only about 60 per cent

of the students who feel the need for a religious orientation find the system in which they were reared satisfactory to their needs. It is fair to report, however, that among the Roman Catholic students who still feel the need for religion 85 per cent express themselves as satisfied with this system of faith.

To illustrate the reshuffling that has taken place in this generation, let us look at the 200 instances of students who report that they were brought up in the more orthodox Protestant churches. Exactly one-quarter of these cases have turned irreligious, declaring that for a mature personality they need no religious orientation of any kind whatsoever. Fourteen per cent of them claim that a new type of religion is needed altogether. An additional 19 per cent shift their allegiance to more liberal forms of Christianity—to Unitarianism perhaps, or to an ethical but entirely nontheological Christianity. We are left with precisely 85 cases, or 42 per cent, who are content to stay within the tradition in which they were reared. The defection is equally great for Judaism and for all other systems of Christian beliefs represented, with the sole exception of Roman Catholicism. The drift throughout seems to be from theocentric emphasis toward ethical emphasis.

Among these youths orthodox faith in theological dogma is waning fast, faster than are religious practices. Certain questions were asked dealing with church attendance, prayer, and subjective feelings of reverence and dependence on a Supreme Being. From the answers we learn that only 15 per cent of the students deny altogether engaging in any religious practices or experiencing any religious states of mind during the preceding six months' period. This finding must mean that many of the students who report that they need no religion in their lives yet engage in some occasional religious practice. We learn that 35 per cent of all women students and 15 per cent of men say their prayers every day,

while an additional 40 per cent of the women, and 50 per cent of the men, pray occasionally though not every day. Only 38 per cent of the women and 17 per cent of the men attend church every week, but the majority do so occasionally. Four-fifths of the women and three-fifths of the men report at least occasional experiences of reverence, devotion, or dependence on a Supreme Being. Religious inclination, and even traditional religious practice, are considerably more prominent than is orthodoxy of belief.

If we were to estimate the extent of belief in the historic pattern of orthodox Christian doctrine, we should arrive at a figure in the neighborhood of 25 per cent. This estimate of the extent of orthodoxy can be made with the aid of various questions. One, for example, deals with Christology. Only 28 per cent of the students subscribe to the view that "Christ, as the Gospels state, should be regarded as divine—as the human incarnation of God." Well over half prefer the view that "Christ should be regarded merely as a great prophet or teacher, much as the Mohammedans accept Mahomet, or as the Chinese accept Confucius." As regards immortality only one-quarter of the students subscribe to the belief in "personal immortality, i.e., the continued existence of the soul as an individual and separate entity." Similarly, a rigidly defined theistic view of the deity attracts the support of only one-fifth of the men and two-fifths of the women. This view is stated in the questionnaire as belief in "an infinitely wise, omnipotent Creator of the universe and of natural laws, whose protection and favor may be supplicated through worship and prayer. God is a personal God." It is not true, however, that the majority of students are atheists. On the contrary, only about 12 per cent consider themselves atheists and an additional 20 per cent agnostics, saying that "because of our necessary ignorance in this matter, I neither believe nor disbelieve in God." The remainder of

the students prefer to express their views in broadly deistic or pantheistic terms.

In this connection we report that there is little support for the Marxist position that religion is the opiate of the people, and that active resistance to organized religious forces is needed in order that people may rightfully claim what is theirs without the reactionary handicap of religious faith. Twelve per cent agree with this extreme position and an additional 12 per cent express no opinion. Seventy-six per cent disagree sharply with it.

Even though the majority have a belief in a God of some kind, the majority likewise, with seeming inconsistency, subscribe to the essentially humanistic proposition, as expressed by John Dewey, "If religion is to play a useful role in life, it should be regarded entirely as a natural human function; it should have nothing whatever to do with supernatural notions." Perhaps the unfortunate word "notion" in this statement biases the answers, for who wishes his religion to deal with mere notions—supernatural or otherwise? And yet to some extent the inconsistency undoubtedly reflects a confusion on the part of many students, who by their own account need religion, and have some type of belief in God, and yet who, at the same time, attempt to rule out the supernatural from their idea of what religion should be.

To interpret this inconsistency I think we need to regard the rejection of supernaturalism as an additional expression of dissatisfaction with the churches whose specific brand of supernaturalism as the students conceive it is unpopular. Discontent with the traditional ecclesiastical positions—especially the Protestant and Jewish—is shown by much of the evidence already cited. In addition we find a high degree of agreement with the proposition that "denominational distinctions, at least within Protestant Christianity, are out of date, and may as well be eliminated as rapidly as possible." Fifty-seven per

cent of all students agree with the ecumenicists in this matter; only 29 per cent disagree, and the remainder have no opinion. Differences of temperament, no doubt, will always require varying styles of worship; and the theological disputes which originally underlay denominational distinctions are regarded by a clear majority of our students as an anachronism.

May we sum up by saying that (1) most students feel the need of including a religious sentiment somewhere within their maturing personalities; (2) for the most part they believe in a God, though their view is not usually of the traditional theistic variety; (3) a bare quarter are in essential matters orthodox and historically faithful to theological dogma; (4) the majority maintain some of the forms of traditional religious practices including prayer; (5) but the majority are clearly dissatisfied with institutional religion as it exists, so much so that 46 per cent of those who feel a religious need yet repudiate the church in which they were reared. If we take the entire student population who have had a religious upbringing, including those who feel no religious need and those who do, we find that 56 per cent reject the church in which they were trained.

It would be wrong to imply that these findings are peculiar to the present college generation. We know that for years the trends here described have been under way. A study conducted at the University of Syracuse in 1926, for example, revealed that half the students at that time felt that, while they needed religion in their own lives, the current practices of the church were unsatisfactory. Only about one-third felt that on the whole these practices were satisfactory—an estimate much like that obtained in the present study. Further, in respect to attitudes toward the deity, actually fewer of the Syracuse students in 1926 endorsed the extreme theistic position, although at the same time a smaller percentage endorsed agnosticism or atheism. Whereas at Syra-

cuse only about 10 per cent abstained altogether from church attendance and devotional practices, our figure is nearer to one-third. We must, of course, remember that not only a difference of time is here involved but also a different type of college population.¹¹

One additional comparison in time is of interest. A certain question included in our survey was identical with a question asked of 3,000 students at the University of Wisconsin in 1930. It had to do with attitudes toward the church. Very few in either institution subscribed to the position that the "Church is one sure and infallible foundation of civilized life"—6 per cent at Cambridge and 4 per cent at Wisconsin. But the second most favorable answer showed a significant difference. "On the whole," the statement reads, "the Church stands for the best in human life, although certain minor shortcomings and errors are necessarily apparent in it, as in all human institutions." To this proposition 37 per cent of Harvard and Radcliffe students in 1946 give assent, but only 24 per cent of Wisconsin students of both sexes in 1930. Correspondingly, statements markedly unfavorable to the church received much more endorsement sixteen years ago than today.¹²

Such trend studies as are available, therefore, show that the disaffection of modern youth is probably no greater today than it was fifteen or twenty years ago. The problem is perennial, probably has been so for the last hundred years, perhaps longer.

If youthful disaffection is so great how does it happen that institutional religion continues? Surely if half the student population in each generation desert the church of their an-

¹¹ D. Katz and F. H. Allport. *Students' Attitudes*, Syracuse: Craftsman Press, 1931, pp. 261, 280, 290.

¹² Cf. W. H. Sheldon. *The Varieties of Human Temperament*, New York: Harper & Bros., 1942, pp. 496-498.

cesters, with few new student adherents being won, it ought not to take long for a vanishing point to be reached. The answer to this puzzle lies in two considerations. After the indolent twenties, the period with which we are here dealing, many young people do in fact return willingly, and sometimes enthusiastically, to the institutional forms from which they rebelled. Secondly, as we have seen, the vestiges of loyalty as reflected in nominal membership and at least occasional church attendance, linger on even among youth who have virtually lost their allegiance to church doctrine. So, on the whole, the church as an institution is less affected than is the dogmatic faith of its youthful members. By enlarging its social activities and by intensifying good works the Protestant church at least is able to preserve a certain vitality, but with a shifting function.

There remains one aspect of the loss of theocentric faith and the drift to non-theological liberalism to be considered. The shift is unquestionably due in part, though not entirely, to the ignorance of students today regarding the teachings of theology. The "queen of the sciences" has fallen from her throne. Were evidence needed we could point to the decline of doctrinal and Biblical teaching in church schools, to the lack of college courses dealing with the tenets of faith, to the reports of many chaplains in the armed services who found only the densest of ignorance of historic doctrine. One may read student autobiographies dealing with personal religious history without finding the slightest comprehension of the theological position which they, more likely than not, are in the process of rejecting. Even more certainly are students ignorant of the reasoned doctrines of Hinduism, Mohammedanism, and all the other great faiths. Lacking a knowledge of comparative religion and of theology, young people cannot have available the solutions reached by great minds in the past even when they are ripe to use them. They

know next to nothing of St. Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhardt, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Swedenborg, Kierkegaard, Newman, Tyrrell, Ritschl, Barth, Bowne, Niebuhr, or any other of the brilliant minds who have wrestled with the rational aspects of the Christian faith. These thinkers are no less aware than the critical undergraduate of today of the intellectual difficulties involved, and of the degree to which institutional religion falls short of its professions. The positions they have achieved are hard won, and possibly valid for themselves alone. But their efforts, nonetheless, might serve as models of the strenuous thinking demanded of every aspirant seeking religious maturity.

Veterans

Before leaving the period of late youth we examine our data to determine the effects of the recent war upon the religious attitudes of veterans. In studying the 290 sincere and candid reports written by veterans one is struck by certain uniformities, but even more by the underlying diversities. To consider first the impression of diversity, I submit three contrasting statements, all written by men with combat experience, all of Protestant background. One veteran wrote:

War is the final proof: (1) that there is no God; (2) that religion is a failure. How can you believe in a beneficent deity when millions of innocent people are dying needlessly? If religion were effective, there could be no war, hatred, persecution, bigotry, starvation, selfishness, imperialism, and colonial exploitation.

Religion has tried for centuries to establish a brotherhood of man. It has had its day. The people should wake up and realize how futile it is, and what hypocrites they are.

The problems religion tries to solve need solving, but religion has failed. I am interested in seeing them solved, but must look to other institutions.

Another veteran of my acquaintance had been unusually devout. While lying in no man's land waiting to attack he was praying. At that very moment a bomb burst close by. He lost one arm, was disfigured and blinded. At that instant, he reports, he became a total and militant atheist. Yet, another blinded veteran reports that for his handicap he has received abundant compensation in the inner light and peace that has come to him along with an awakened faith.

As an instance of a quietly sustained private faith we have this statement:

If I had not had a personal religious philosophy when I entered combat I do not believe that I would have lasted at all. For me it was most definitely a source of strength. I require no one else to hold my beliefs but I experience intense personal comfort from them myself. I can think of no other single thing that sustains me day by day so much as my personal belief in God. I can't hold it out to other people because I really can't explain it.

And between the antis and the pros there are many confessions of perplexity and groping. A typical instance is this:

I find myself highly confused. Don't believe in any organized religion, but do believe in the innate goodness of man. I believe in the Christian virtues, but not in the Christian religion.

I was struck by how untouched the majority appeared to be by the basic and simplest principles of religion with respect to charity to one's neighbor, etc. I was convinced therefore that the only possible way to change or to improve this situation is to substitute some system of reasonable ethics for present denominational beliefs.

This statement is representative of the situation that so commonly exists in many minds today—Christian ethics outlasting Christian doctrine.

The diversity of these statements speaks for itself. As so often happens in the development of personality, the crises

of existence tend merely to intensify the style of life which was in any case developing. Occasionally, of course, there are abrupt changes, but usually these turn out on closer scrutiny to be accentuations of what was previously a latent tendency.

From the statistical point of view we find that 55 per cent of the veterans say that the war made them neither more nor less religious than they were before. Twenty-six per cent, however, claim that it made them *more* religious, and only 19 per cent that it made them *less* so. This is an interesting result in view of the fact that on most of the other questions, especially those dealing with conventional religious beliefs and practices, veterans turn out to be more dissident than non-veterans. Likewise we recall that among veterans a slightly larger percentage said that they needed no religious orientation in their personalities. These apparent inconsistencies may be reconciled in a single conclusion: the war created a few more anti-religious attitudes than are present among non-veterans, but in those retaining a religious sentiment the effect was to intensify its prominence.

It still remains true that nearly two-thirds of the veterans reported a need for a religion in their lives. To the question whether war experience made them more or less *interested* in the problems religion seeks to answer, 58 per cent replied, "more." Only 5 per cent said they became less interested. Here perhaps is the clearest indication of all that the war experience was one of critical intensity, and created in contemporary youth a level of interest probably not equaled in any previous generation during the modern age. But the increased interest has not been accompanied by a proportionately augmented faith.

Among the veterans who had decided that their personalities required no religious faith, and among those who were doubtful about the matter—36 per cent in all—the development of a humanitarian substitute can often be detected. In a functional sense these veterans have replaced a religious

faith with ethical meliorism. For example, in the following statement there is an integrating zeal devoid of the metaphysical wish.

Why will individuals be so foolish and hypocritical as to spend time and money on religion when intensive programs conducted against TB, venereal disease, cancer, polio, etc. with the same energy and money, would wipe out these dread diseases? . . . Organized religion will always be prey to graft and hypocrisy and can never be just. It is merely another schism in a divided world—a curse.

This tirade is somewhat exceptional. In most cases, among disbelievers as well as believers, there is evidence of sympathy for all forms of religious yearning, and respect for whatever solution an individual in his own conscience has achieved. This tolerance, it should be noted, is directed more toward individuals than toward institutionalized religion or its representatives. Only one veteran had a favorable remark to make regarding the chaplain of his unit. Many more were critical. But perhaps the conditions of the study invited critical rather than appreciative comment.

Complaints regarding the clergy generally have one principal basis—their alleged ineptness in handling human relationships. Though few of the veterans seem to have heard of the current movement to provide clinical training for the clergy, it is certain that they would heartily endorse it. For they seem to feel that chaplains during the war were lacking techniques appropriate to the cure of souls. Even those chaplains whose churches provided them objective, sacramental aids are felt to need additional training in modern psychological and administrative skills.

We turn, in conclusion, to the fighting man in combat, under conditions of great stress. There, by his own report, he stands revealed as a praying animal. Without the evidence of our study, I for one should not have predicted how truly universal is the impulse to pray in times of stress. I

should have thought that irreligious personalities would have resisted, even in times of extremity, acts entirely foreign to the customary frame of their personalities. And, of course, some of them did behave consistently in this regard. Several veterans denied having even the slightest inclination to pray. But they were the exceptions. Far more characteristic is this report:

Eight months of infantry combat in Europe made me during that period very religious. Some days I prayed continuously. During the Battle of the Bulge all I did was fight, eat, and pray to stay awake, alert, alive.

Especially revealing is the statement which reads:

I flew 30 missions over Germany in a bomber. As the going got rougher I would just hope all the harder that we would get out of harm's way. Fear motivated the hoping, and where hoping ends and prayer begins I don't know.

In this statement lies an important insight. Prayer is continuous with hope, as hope is continuous with fear. Religious activity thus grows imperceptibly out of desire. The mind finds itself gradually stretching beyond the limits of its own adaptive capacity, seeking to add to its natural powers a reasonable complement. In some people, as in this veteran, the sense of complementation occurs only in times of crisis; in others it occurs every day in a variety of ways whenever mundane activities seem suddenly to belong to some eternal scheme.

Many of our reporters expressed the opinion that "everyone prays in one way or another when he is in combat." One, however, varies the point slightly: "There were atheists in foxholes," he writes, "but most of them were in love." Here we have another shrewd insight: the individual in distress craves affection and security. Sometimes a human bond will suffice, more often it will not. Prayer in foxholes

is undoubtedly a religious act, but from the point of view of solid development of the religious sentiment, a foxhole is a poor place in which to learn to pray, for the religion of a merely frightened man is likely to evaporate as soon as danger is removed.

Oddly mixed with skepticism and humor is the following philosophy of prayer:

After seeing many of the habitual churchgoers killed, and realizing that they prayed as much, perhaps more than I, I decided that prayer had no survival value for me. To be sure I still prayed, but it seems to me now that it was a case of being on the safe side if I did get killed. I don't believe in a hereafter now that I am leading a less hazardous life, but at the same time it seems like a good idea to keep on the good side of whatever powers there be. There is no point in shoveling coal if one has a chance of playing a harp.

The efficacy of prayer as a means of personal protection worried many. "My closest friend and myself never prayed," writes one veteran, "and were never even wounded. I saw one boy praying and killed during his prayer by a German SS shell."

Violent and perplexing shocks of this order bring doubts and rejection. Combat veterans have seen human suffering at its most intense. They have beheld the march of the unleashed forces of evil. Before their eyes have unrolled the very facts that are hardest to reconcile with the existence of a God. Further, they have lived at a time and in a situation where there is no longer a prevailing climate of belief. Thus the last traces of their childhood religion have been forcibly wiped out. Should they yet find a way of satisfying the religious need which, in spite of everything, in most of them persists, they will do so only by way of the religion of maturity.