

public arts, but he is not proposing to lead them in a crusade. In common with Jacques Barzun,* who writes in similar terms of the rôle of music—a most pervasive one—in American life, he is seemingly ready to accept the fact that the public arts, and the gramophone, owe some of their sway to “an increasing resistance to words.” Here the New Transigence does frighten me a little. Is word-purveying, save as an elementary exercise, to become an obsolete craft, like cottage weaving or the manufacture of cigarettes? *Je n'en vois pas la nécessité*, as the lady said about death. There is something a little eerie in working through a batch of books on contemporary America, perhaps because they are so contemporary that they whirl one onward in a time-machine, overhauling the future; for in practice living in the present means trying to live in the future.

ALL such fears are allayed by Mr. Dingwall,† whose book brings a whiff of Europe and

* *Music in American Life*. By JACQUES BARZUN. Doubleday. \$2.75.

† *The American Woman*. By ERIC JOHN DINGWALL. Duckworth. 25s.

the past. His theme is American women, their sad history of frustration and frigidity and their disastrous effect upon American civilisation. His story is not without merit; he has culled a mass of evidence, some of it from reputable witnesses, and there is no doubt that he has a point. But it is a curiously old-fashioned point; and even though many of his sources are American, I think it is mainly a European point, all about the American dreadfulness and the need for Americans to relax and fecundate. Has he not heard of the new dispensations? His is an America whose denizens are still saying *sez you?* and *twenty-three skiddoo* to one another. I can find no mention in *The American Woman*—which has thousands of citations—of the writings of David Riesman, or Erich Fromm, or anything by Karen Horney since 1926, or of Margaret Mead's *Male and Female*. By way of compensation, there are copious references to such publications as *Esquire*, to Philip (“Mom”) Wylie, and to a horde of daft or superficial European observers. Stephen Leacock remarks that half-truths, like half-bricks, go further in argument; if so, Mr. Dingwall will meet with a lively reception.

Marcus Cunliffe

A.D. 1956

IN TIMES of disillusion and danger a secular society requires a patient but active courage from its leading citizens if it is to have much chance of survival. Its corrosive enemies are anxiety, frightened impatience, and the neurotic boredom and apathy which frequently attend such states of excitement. Contemporary Western secular civilisation in its present perilous situation seems to be seriously threatened from within by exactly such neurotic reactions, though the extent of this destructive response may be less than it appears, for alarm is necessarily more vocal than patient courage. While many of the Western intellectuals who plead for a return to religion do so because, after mature consideration, they believe that in both religious instinct and in the organised religions lie the only possible solutions to the dilemmas of modern civilisation, many also—and these again probably the most vocal—see in religion an escape from their panic. Dr. Toynbee's new book* will give genuine satisfaction to the former class; it will also no doubt have fashionable success among the latter.

* *An Historian's Approach to Religion*. By ARNOLD TOYNBEE. Oxford University Press. 21s.

Dr. Toynbee starts his argument from the inner contradiction that dwells in men. Each man is inevitably self-centred. If he does not preserve this self-centredness, he will inevitably seek extinction. If he remains self-centred, he will also perish—for this self-centredness is a palpable and absurd illusion. From this contradiction come sorrow and anxiety. The reality of religion allows man to accept this contradiction and to endure sorrow. Each man has his own approach to this reality, Dr. Toynbee declares, but he suggests that the historian's approach may be of a special interest, because the very pursuit of historical studies shows a peculiar desire to escape from self-centredness in time. He agrees, of course, that in practice historians do not wholly succeed in escaping from their own personalities, or from their own time, in their search to understand the past. He cites here the limitations of Gibbon and we may note that he could not have chosen an historian whose limitations are more convenient for his thesis. Indeed I cannot help thinking that the whole of Dr. Toynbee's argument would have been strengthened if he had attempted some self-analysis, some suggestion of the connections between his own view of history and his personality

and place in time. This, however, is only part of a general defect in Dr. Toynbee's book to which I shall return later in the review.

THE nature of the religious instinct and the peculiar qualifications of the historian to discuss it established, Dr. Toynbee proceeds to an account of how man has approached religion throughout history. His thesis here will be familiar to readers of *A Study of History*, of which it is avowedly a selection and enlargement of the sections relating to religion. Man's first worship is of nature, the world outside him. Human conquest of nature—so late in time when seen against the whole history of man, so remote from us—leads to the replacement of the worship of nature by man-worship, the considerable variety of anthropomorphic religions. This in turn, by its failure to resolve the inner contradiction—particularly the problem of sorrow—from which man's religious instinct derives, gives place to the higher religions, in which man turns his reverence to absolute reality. The higher religions arise late in man's history. This cycle is to be observed at different times in progress in different parts of the world. Finally, through certain external stresses and inner weaknesses, the higher religions ceased to hold man's allegiance, and the cycle has been repeated in the modern world.

The major part of Dr. Toynbee's historical analysis is given to two aspects of this cycle: the forms man-worship has taken and the causes of the decline of the higher religion. It is upon these that he bases his analysis of the contemporary world and seeks avoidance of future decay of religion. The earliest form of anthropomorphism—passing usually from polytheism to monotheism—finds its expression in what he calls the Idolisation of Parochial Communities: the Ancient Near Eastern Kingdoms, the Great City States, the Roman Republic, the Modern Nation States. This worship leads inevitably to war, destruction, and chaos. A solution is then found in the worship of the Oecumenical State: the Chinese Empire, the Roman Empire. Contemporary with this phase there is usually some allegiance to man as a self-sufficient philosopher: Socrates and the Greek philosophers, Confucius, the modern technician. In Marcus Aurelius we see an attempt to arrest the decline of an Oecumenical Community by combining its worship with idolisation of the philosopher. Of these philosopher cults, only Confucianism has had any enduring success. The Oecumenical Community inevitably collapses through bureaucratic government, growing lack of enthusiasm, and general insufficient incentive. (Here, Dr. Toynbee follows the post-Rostovtzeff analysis of the Roman Empire.) It is then that man turns to

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absolute reality in despair and the higher religion comes into its own. This transfer of allegiance comes from below, from the depressed masses, for the disillusioned ruling classes try vainly to pursue the philosopher cults. Western civilisation is now at the crisis of the Parochial stage with only two powerful nation states—America and Russia—left in the field. We may confidently expect that as a result of war or agreement this conflict will be resolved and an Oecumenical State will succeed; and this time, because of changed geography, that State will be a true world State. The worship of the World State will in its turn no doubt collapse and man shows signs already of seeking reality in religion. It is therefore of the greatest urgency that the higher religion which will command his devotion should not once again fail him.

Higher religions have previously declined because of certain internal changes that came about as a result of their acquiring wide allegiance. They have lost their spirituality in mundane tasks. They have tended to demand worship for the Church as an institution. They have acquired a superstructure of theology in order to win the support of the philosophy-trained ruling classes. They have failed altogether in tolerance. Dr. Toynbee, though he inclines to Christianity—

Short Story COMPETITION

As announced in the July issue, ENCOUNTER magazine is offering a prize of £100 for the best short story in the English language by an Asian or African writer. The following have agreed to act as judges:

EDMUND BLUNDEN

(Head of Department of English, Hong Kong University)

JOHN MORRIS

(Controller, B.B.C. Third Programme, and sometime Professor of English Literature, Keio University, Tokyo)

STEPHEN SPENDER

(Co-editor of ENCOUNTER)

There is no limitation as to subject, but the following rules are binding on all competitors:

1. No competitor may submit more than one story. It should not have been published before and must not exceed 5,000 words in length.
2. Entries should be addressed to ENCOUNTER (Story Competition), 25 Haymarket, London, S.W. 1, to arrive not later than January 31st, 1957. Competitors should state their nationality.
3. All entries must be typewritten and accompanied by English stamps or International Reply Coupons, together with a self-addressed envelope for return. Entries cannot be acknowledged.
4. The winning entry will be published in ENCOUNTER, which shall also have first option on any other entries considered suitable for publication at current rates. The judges reserve the right to withhold the prize if, in their opinion, no suitable entry is received.
5. The judges cannot enter into correspondence about entries and their decision is final.

and indeed shows a marked admiration for the Roman Catholic Church—sees the only hope for civilisation in a higher religion tolerant of other higher religions, not perhaps synthetic but always conscious that every religion is an expression of the absolute reality; in the discarding of irrelevant and obsolete institutions, ceremonies, and theological doctrine. Dr. Toynbee sees some faint hope that these lessons may eventually be learned in the greater mutual tolerance between the higher religions today.

IT HAS been necessary to outline the thesis of Dr. Toynbee's book at length because criticism of his views depends so much on the total statement. Before criticising the matter of the book, however, a word must be said on the author's manner of presenting his thesis. In his preface Dr. Toynbee disarms criticism by stating: "I know very well that . . . I have been presenting merely one view among many possible alternatives. . . . If any passages in the present book seem dogmatic, this is an effect of compression in the writing, not of illusions in the writer's mind." It must be said at once that the total effect of the book *is* dogmatic and that this impression tells against the author's argument. The thesis is so succinctly and so closely presented, and objections are so seldom stated in detail, that in the end the reader inevitably feels less sympathetic than he wishes to be. Ultimately, too, this compression gives a feeling of unfairness to his opponents. I am sure that Dr. Toynbee recognises, for example, the many contributions that secular thought has made to civilisation since the 17th century—indeed he quotes many sympathetic passages on tolerance from Bayle and Locke—yet never once is this stated. Again, as I have already suggested, it was unfortunate to select only Gibbon for the analysis of historical animus. If we add to this certain idiosyncrasies—referring to the present time as A.D. 1956 instead of as "now" and constant quotations from the New Testament with referential footnotes—we get a presentation as irritating as it is impressive.

It would be presumptuous for an amateur historian to criticise the historical basis of the thesis; nevertheless as the foregoing analysis shows, it rests primarily upon the history of Christianity. Dr. Toynbee uses the Eastern religions freely as examples and makes brilliantly the charge against denial of the self in his comparison between Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism. Nevertheless, the main thesis rests on Christianity; for example, the idea that higher religion springs from the depressed masses would seem less applicable to Buddhism. Dr. Toynbee may feel that for Western readers the Christian example is the most telling, but a full analysis of the history

of one of the other six higher religions would have added weight to the argument.

If the picture of the modern world (post-1600 in Dr. Toynbee's terms) seems at times unfair, it also seems partial. The religious sentiment has played its part in exactly Dr. Toynbee's sense in the arts pre-eminently since the end of the 18th century. But the universal nature which he demands for religion gives small place to other expressions of man's spiritual aspirations.

THE most serious criticisms, however, of Dr. Toynbee's thesis can be directed at its feasibility and its desirability. If men are to be won to a world of higher religions living in mutual tolerance, then fanaticism even without violence must be avoided. Dr. Toynbee demands rightly that this tolerance must be based not as secular tolerance has been upon indifference but upon respect. Such a frame of mind would seem to demand that its exponents should have attained sanctity or become mystic contemplatives. For the general run of men such tolerance could only accompany a religion that at most filled part of their lives. They would seek other forms of spiritual expression, yet it is surely exactly here that a Universal State would be most deficient. Something here emerges from Dr. Toynbee's view that the failure of the aims of Hildebrand and of Innocent III spelt the end of

the last hope of the old Christian higher religion. European civilisation of the 12th century had many virtues, but it seems doubtful if man could have rested content with the range of expression it allowed to him and it is difficult to believe that Papal Europe could have satisfied his growing demands. The difficulties in the way of Dr. Toynbee's hopes are vast, but he may rightly ask us to accept them in view of our present situation if he can show us that his ends will satisfy. In the last resort, however, it seems possible or even probable that the universal establishment of the higher religions based on mutual tolerance would end in the apathy, frustration, and uniformity that he sees as the fate of Oecumenical States. And this is not perhaps surprising for such is the likely fate not only of Oecumenical States but of Utopias.

It seems disagreeable and churlish so to criticise a thesis put forward with such evident concern for humanity and distress at its peril, and put forward in the preface with such modesty, but Dr. Toynbee's teaching demands criticism if only because it is at once pessimistic, Utopian, and historically determinist. We have seen something of the effect of such teaching in the writings of Spengler and Marx. Unlike their teaching Dr. Toynbee's is, of course, benevolent, tolerant, and modest. Nevertheless it is well, I think, that the Anglo-Saxon world he addresses is so stoutly clothed in empirical armour.

Angus Wilson

DEMOCRACY AND AUTHORSHIP

RARELY a year passes without some petition or memorial or appeal being submitted to some statesman or bishop or eminent body of sorts, under the signatures of literary men calling on the said statesman or bishop or body to do something or other in favour of democratic government and democratic rights somewhere. From such occasions one might naturally conclude that writers are by the nature of their calling well disposed towards the parliamentary form of government. It is the one that is most apt to grant them that freedom of speech without which their calling is vain; the literary predilection for parliamentarism is logical. Yes, that is all true, and that is the orthodox view of literary politics, I believe. The fact remains that when you look into what has been written by authors on the subject of parliamentary elections, and parliamentary procedure, you will find almost nothing but sarcasm, irony, contempt, and abuse. Many masterpieces of poetry have

been addressed to tyrants and tyrannical noblemen and their wives and favourites, but precious little worth remembering to the House of Commons or the *Chambre des Deputés* or the American Congress and Senate. One cannot imagine the genius of Andrew Marvell expressing itself happily in an Horatian Ode on the achievements of the Barebones Parliament. Last time Sir Anthony went to America no one sang "When Westward like the Sun you sailed away. . ."

It is rather the fashion to think of Disraeli as a considerable novelist (not a fashion I have been able to follow), but if he was truly a great writer of fiction, then he seems to have been an almost unique exception to the rule that professional writers make bad statesmen. The French have found that they make good ambassadors, but that is about as far as they can safely go on the road to power. Lamartine went farther on that road than any other