PSYCHOLOGISTS ARE GETTING RELIGION

By WILLIAM H. ROBERTS

A N astronomer may be a deacon in a church. His fellow startonomer will not hold that against him. A physicist may will not say a superintendent of a Sunday tist. A school. That will as superintendent of a Sunday tist. A chemist may teach a Bible of ween praced as science-occasional serron without endangering his greation. A psychologist who is suspected of being religious is at once under suspicious of scientific incompetents.

Yet as psychologists undertake to deal with men, women and children as creatures who want, and who experience happiness or misery, they find themselves driven to take over some of the functions of the priest or the minister. As they endeavor to carry out their duties, they find themselves confronting the same problems that priests and ministers have been confronting ever since there were priests or ministers. Somewhat to their surprise, perhaps even a little to their dismay, psychologists are becoming aware that some of the solutions they have been offering as the latest discoveries of science are strangely like those for which preachers and theologians have been contending for nearly twenty centuries. The resemblance grows as insight into human needs and possibilities deepens. A logic immanent in the facts of human suffering and joy, more powerful than the logic of theories which for a time drove psychologists away from religion, is now driving them back to it.

A particularly striking example of the translation of ancient doctrine into the language of contemporary science is the re-discovery of original sin. SIN, whether "original" or incurred had all but disappeared from the single properties of liberal Protestant ministers when Freud horrified the westling of little distribution. No grim Puritan divine, no militant Father of the Church Church Union. No grim them to the unconscious and the sexuality of little children. Which of the unconscious and the sexuality of little children. Which of them, we may pause to ask, described the impulses of a batty as "polymorphous perversity" as "polymorphous perversity".

Partly as a result of the "new psychology" the intellectual and enotional atmosphere today is very different from that which prevaled at the beginning of the century. We are no longer confident of progress. Instead we are building shelters to protect us from atomic bombs. It is sophistication today to doubt the reality, even the possibility, of virtue. We are taught

to suspect selfah motives behind even those setions that seem must usselfah or heroic. We can no longer permit ourselves even the enjoyment of a "good conscience." If it happens that we can find nothing in our outward behavior or in our thoughts with which to reproach ourselves, we are nevertheless sure that the unconscious of even the best of us is a hideous underworld in which horrible monsters, like the devils in hell, ceaselessly plot assaults upon every form of deenery. From that underworld, we may add, they make their way out in disquises that oult the specially trained can penetrate.

Was it a subtle irony that prompted God to send a savagely anti-eligious Jew to remind Christians of one of the central doctrines of their faith? Was it another instance of diviniony that sent another savagely anti-religious Jew. Karl Marx, to point out that an economic order based solely on greed was not only morally revolting but practically unworkable, and

would inevitably destroy itself?

Of these modern prophets of Israel, Freud is by far the sterner and gloomier. Marz looked forward to men's return from the captivity into which the blindness of the masses and the selfich enuming of their leaders ladd brought them. When the selfic the selfic control of the will build a New Jerusalem (the classless society). From the new Cloud streams of bending will flow through all the world for all the lilt to which man is subject. All of this will be brought about, not by deliberate planning, but by the irrestiatible working of a dialectic. Oddly, Marx failed to see that his dialectic was only Freud dienich the reality of God under any name at all.

There could be no release from captivity. Our human nature halt is origin in, and was shaped beyond the possibility of basic change by, a brutal struggle for existence. Sublimation of our worst imputes in possible, to be sure, but our expectity for it is imitted. We are wholly imagable of beat better than the substitution of the property of civilization must impose ever more burdensome demands for self denial. The result must be an ever increasing complexity of civilization must impose ever more burdensome demands for self denial. The result must be an ever increasing incidence of neutrons. In the end civilization is left must collapse in one gigantic collective neurosis! Here, we may well note, it as the tentile that the property version of The Doy of Julgment and the Hell

The results of our rediscovery of sin are not matters for leisurely speculation. They are hard and terrible facts—hard as the hearts of Nazi torturers or Communist officials, terrible as the massacre at Lidice or the long agonies of Siberian working camps. If men are not ruled by reason and good will but by greed, fear, lust and cruelty, democracy must be the worst of all forms of government. No people can be trusted with freedom. The state is under no obligation to concern itself with the welfare of its individual citizens. Resistance to its will must be crushed by ruthless force. Important questions must be decided, to paraphrase Robert Ingersoll, not by discussion but by concussion.

Whether it calls itself Freudian or "scientific," psychology agrees with religion in its emphasis upon the ravages of guilt and the necessity for release. The psychotherapeutic procedure presents a number of parallels with the practice of confession. (That is not to say that the two are identical.) The therapist may practice the self-effacement of the psychoanalyst, the "permissiveness" of "non-directive" therapy, or the re-assuring calm of the eclectic. All of these encourage complete confession and hold out the promise of absolution. When the therapist and the patient together have done their work well, the burden of guilt "rolls away." The patient leaves with a sense of freedom and cleanness and with new hope and courage. The revivalist war whoop, "I'm saved, saved, SAVED!" is scarcely more exuberant than the expressions of those who have been "saved" by scientific techniques.1

At its best the psychotherapeutic interview re-enacts, as Professor Paul Tillich has so strikingly pointed out, one of the central Christian mysteries—the mystery of "justification by faith." The patient comes to the therapist, principally because he cannot accept himself. He finds himself accepted, though he is convinced that he is unacceptable. He is accepted not because he is good or loveable, but in spite of the fact that he is bad and repulsive.

Lucy Freeman supplies details.

It is as though he pleads, "Please believe in me—no one else ever has. Please trust me—no one else ever has. Please love me—no one else ever has!" He seeks a love that will forgive him his anger and hate, recognizing it as the only way he knew to fight his fear. He seeks for a love that will allow him to lose his loneliness. He searches for someone who will care enough about him so he may care for and trust himself.3

The therapist's questions are unsparing. They anticipate

For a really delightful account of release obtained from scientific counseling read the letter quoted in Seabury's How Jesus Heals our Minds Today, p. 67-68.
 In the concluding chapter of his book, The Courage to Be. Yale University Press, 1952.
 Freeman, Lucy, Hope for the Troubled, p. 49 Crown Publishers, inc., 1953.

and frustrate every evasion. They break down every defense, They expose every deception. Yet the object is never condemnation. There is only encouragement to face realities, to acknowledge error, limitation and guilt. Again Lucy Freeman has stated the matter with admirable fueldity.

He does not want me to think in terms of what I "should" or "should not" do but what I feel like doing. For unless I do, I shall be unable to build a life based on

purpose instead of deceit.\(^1\)
Acknowledgement of failure and sin is not permitted to

end in despair. The patient gains courage to accept himself, When one has fully faced the worst in oneself, and no longer tries to deny or conceal it, one may begin to build a new life. That new life will be healthire, stronger, more useful, and happier than the one which was based on evasion and pretense. "Only the priestly man," Professor Tillich has warned,

"can be a complete psychiatrist. One who undertakes to deal with guilt and shame, fear and hate, lust, greed and eruelty, or with love, joy, courage and hope less seriously, on any lower plane, or from any inferior motivation, can give only superficial

relief and may do serious harm."

Though some psychoanalysts and psychiatrists may be shocked at the suggestion that they are in any way "priestly," their training is deliberately designed to develop just those qualities of mind and heart-or of intellect and emotionthat have always characterized priests and ministers at their best. To minister to human suffering and need, to awaken hope, to call forth courage and to strengthen resolution, priest and psychiatrist must both develop a thoroughgoing and unflinching realism. They must be able to confront the most repulsive and hideous facts of human wrongdoing without revulsion or dismay. Compassion must swallow up horror or disgust. Both must have a deep faith in human beings, and must be able to see clearly the possibilities of health, happiness and beauty that lie within even those human beings that seem most unpromising. They must be able to speak with confidence -born of their own victories over confusion, doubt and weakness. Both must be acquainted with the sources from which men, women and children can draw guidance, courage and cheer, Both, finally, must be dedicated persons, seeking first of all to

lighten the burdens that press so heavily upon mankind.

Almost innumerable passages from the Psalms, from Christian confession and prayer throughout the centuries and from

^{1.} Freeman, Lucy, Fight Against Fears, p. 109. Crown Publishers, Inc., 1951.

hymns can easily be re-phrased in the language of our contemporary psychotherapy. The 139th Psalm is not too long to quote in full. Note in what detail it describes the process of therapy

O LORD, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off.

Thou compasseth my path and my lying down,

Thou art acquainted with all my ways.

For there is not a word in my tongue,

But lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before,

And laid thine hand upon me.

Of a patient today we would say that he soon realizes that the probing will not stop until every secret shame or regret

The first reaction is one of repulsion, fear, flight, or resistance. The figures of the poetry are those of three thousand years ago and a culture very different from our own. The experience is very like that of great numbers of men and women

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;

If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning.

And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there shall thy hand lead me, And thy right hand shall cover me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; Even the night shall be light about me.

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; The darkness and the light are both alike to thee. For thou hast possessed my reins;

Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. Little by little the resistance breaks down before the relentless but kindly and strangely comforting probing. Wonder is born, and with wonder a new hope.

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully

Marvellous are Thy works; And that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee

My substance was not hid from The When I was made in secret,

And curiously wrought in the lowest part of the earth.

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect;

And in Thy Book all my members were written.

Which in continuance were fashioned.

When as yet there was none of them.

How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God: How great is the sum of them!

If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand:

When I awake, I am still with Thee.

Now resistance, flight and evasion turn to rapturous identification. At first it is too exuberant. Again we must remember the time and the cultural background from which the Psalmist wrote.

Surely Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God;

Depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against Thee wickedly,

And Thine enemies take Thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee?

And am not I grieved with those that rise up against
Thee?

I hate them with perfect hatred:

I hate them with perfect hatre I count them mine enemies.

In the end the patient joins with the divine Therapist, first in the work of analysis—
Search me, O God, and know my heart:

Search me, O God, and know my heart:
Try me and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me,

and lastly in the planning of a new way of life—

And lead me in the way everlasting.

Psychology agrees with Christian thinking in tracing in to crude selfames and ecocentricity. Psychology and religion agree, too, in affirming the need for conversion. Frend, indeed, demanded to sconversions. To attain the psychological stature of a normal adult every individual must be converged stature of a normal adult every individual must be solved from the pleasure principle to the fact or resulty principle, from the pleasure principle to the fact or resulty principle, the properties of the properties of the properties of the properties with a conversion results in a neurotic or psychopathic personalsured and the properties of the properties of

ity.

The changes may be gradual or abrupt. That abrupt and extensive changes of behavior patterns do occur is, of

course, firmly established. Saint Paul stated the matter suc cinctly, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." (II Corinthians, 5: 17). John Masefield wrote in greater

I did not think, I did not strive, The deep peace burnt my me alive; The bolted door had broken in, I knew that I was dead to sin. I knew that Christ had given me birth

To brother all the souls on earth,

And every bird and every beast Should share the crumbs broke at the feast.

The transition from primitive Narcissism and egocentricity to object love and cooperation with one's fellows is affected through identification. The word is a particularly happy selection. The importance of right identifications is obviously immense. Christianity and Buddhism have insisted upon identification with all mankind, as wide as human need and deeper than even the natural craving for life and security." Vincent Sheean found a saint among the Communists.

Rayna Prohme felt a genuine relationship to all forms of human life. That was the essence of it. To her the Chinese coolie was another part of the whole life, rich, various, cruel and immense, that she shared to the extent of her limits in space and time. She could not see a Chinese coolie beaten and half starved, reduced to the level of the beasts, without feeling herself also beaten and half starved, degraded and oppressed; and the part of her that rebelled against this horror (her mind and spirit) was inflexibly resolved by now never to lie down under the monstrous system of the world. Man's inhumanity to man seemed to her a great deal more than that; it was an inhumanity of one part of the same body to another. The Shanghai entrepeneurs who employed thousands of Chinese men, women and children at starvation wages for twelve and fourteen hours a day were, to her, like the hands of a body cutting off its legs."

In its saints, martyrs, prophets, heroes and adventurers

Masefield, John, The Evoluting Mercy. P. 118 in the complete edition of his poems. Mac-I. Manifeld, John, The Eordining Marcy. P. 118 in the component wants or an Proceedings 152. Desired 152. Des

religion offers a vast array of personalities of great beauty and power. Identification with sugares eannot fail to enrich life and render it productive. "The communion of saints," the realization that one belongs to a great and glorious church, world-wide and eternal in its membership and ministry, is a sustaining power. Even patriotism falls short of it in breadth and richness.

The mystics' experience of "union" may appear a little more plausible, and perhaps a little more attraction and women, if we think of it as "identification". One may "identification is the whole cosmos. Marcus Annuel One may such identification in the dignified language befitting a Roman superor and a Stoic—

Everything harmonizes with me which is harmonious to Thee, O Universe. Nothing for me too early or too late, which is in time for Thee. Everything is fruit for me which Thy seasons bring, O Native From Thee are all things, in Thee are all things, to Thee all things.

Thomas Traherne, an English mystic of the 17th century, became lyrical—

You never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself flows in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars.

At the height of such experience all feeling of separateness is dissolved. All conflict is quieted. One is at rest yet charged with tremendous energy. The mystics identification with 60d, even more than the patriot's with his country, derives reinforcement and intensification from a vision of "a splendor so overwhelming that all considerations of safety are driven from the mind."

When safety can be forgotten, security is won.

There are two kinds of security: One when the future

is guaranteed; the other when the present is right.

This latter is the sense of religious freedom and religious security: Freedom, because one knows that one's own personality is ultimately unimportant; security, because one knows that the Kingdom of Love is the only thing worth living for, worth suffering for, if need be, worth divine fore'

Were it not for the vision of splendor, the realization of

Auselian Antonime, Marcus, Maditation, Iv, 23. Long's translation.
 Traberne, Thumsu (1647-1643), Conferring of Maditations.
 Bullet and Thumsu (1647-1643), Conferring of Maditations.
 Wallet and Thumsure (1647-1643). Bullet and Brechers. 1949.
 Valuation and Madistration of the World Today. Quarted in Publics, Durothy Berkley.
 The Choice in Always Davis op. 483-493. Subsect R. Smith, 1944.

one's personal insignificance would be devastating. The mystic finds it liberating and uplifting. Empty of self, he is gloriously filled with that which is immeasurably more satisfying than even the most complete realization of his merely selfish or natural

aims. Losing his very life, he really begins to live.

The old, old paradox is not just a religious oracle. It is a central principle of psychotherapy. Mental disorders, so far as they are not the result of bodily infection or injury, have their origin for the most part in a petty concern for self. The cure, when that is achieved, consists almost wholly in persuading the patient to take an interest in something else, or in other persons. A simple distraction may be sufficient to effect a tolerable adjustment to ordinary situations. I have been told of a man who saved himself from "nervous breakdown" by making a collection of the tops from milk bottles. While we must congratulate him upon such an easy way out of his difficulties, we may well wonder whether a thoroughgoing identification with some larger object or some urgent "cause" might not have effected a deeper, more comprehensive integration and one more likely to prove productive.

Prayer is obviously related to auto-suggestion. The beneficial effects of "good" and persistent auto-suggestion are generally acknowledged. All this is not to say that prayer is only auto-suggestion. Disbelief in prayer is also often the result of auto-suggestion, of continually suggesting to ourselves that the universe is a vast but purposeless mechanism. There is no way to escape auto-suggestion. We can only choose the

suggestions.

There is no reason why prayer cannot be both auto-suggestion and a true communion with a genuine Reality. If there is such a Being as those who pray believe there is, we should still have to approach Him with certain preliminaries, to cultivate a sensitiveness to such communications as He may grant to us, and to fixate new insights and resolves by reiteration. It is possible to write all these off as only auto-suggestion; but that may not be the most accurate accounting. They may also be conditions for an experience of reality and truth open to any who will undertake the venture.

From the stilling of all conflicts, the quieting of clamorous desires, and the direction of thought to sublime objects with which men can readily identify themselves, freedom and peace do result. Extraordinary insights are won, that prove themselves of the greatest practical worth. New energy, joy and

refreshment are other rewards.

Frequently the gains are of great importance for society. The life of prayer and the life of active service are like two oars of a boat. To pull either alone is to spin in a circle of futility. If there is to be progress, the two must work together in proper balance.

The convergence of psychology and religion is ground for high hope that seech will enrich the other. Psychology can serve religion by clarifying certain religious ideas. Thus religion asserts, "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6: 23), Psychology can document the statement that very few of us are fully aire. We fail to win happiness or psace, beauties we carry affly aire. We fail to win happiness or psace, beauties we carry affly aire. We fail to win happiness or psace, beauties we carry Because we cannot fully identify ourselves with our fellows or strive for what Adler has so happily called "true goals," we live in fear of one another. The witches' broth of fears, hatroda and greeds forces great nations into ever more devastating wars, and within nations sets claus against class. Psychology and within another class and the psychology of the psychology of the properties of the psychology of the

The text just quoted concludes, "but the gift of God is eternal life." Psychology cannot promise eternal life, at least not yet. It can provide pointers along the way to fulness of life. It confirms religion's insight that love is salvation. Thus

Erich Fromm has written-

There is no more convineing proof that the injunction 'Love thy neighbor as thyese!' is the most important norm of living and that its violation is the basic cause of unhappiness and mental liness than the ovidence gathered unhappiness and mental liness than the vidence gathered patient, may have, whatever symptoms he may present are rooted in his inability to love. Analytic theorypy is essentially an attempt to help the patient regain that capacity for low. It this aim is not fulfilled, nothing

Is this more than a commentary upon St. John's compact utterance, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethran?" (I John, 3: 15). Through its detailed study of man's need for love, moreover, and of the obstacles love must overcome and the pitfalls it must avoid, psychology can corroborate and enrich Saint Paul's great hymn to love.

As psychology clarifies many of the ideas with which reli-

Fromm, Erich, Psychomalysis and Religion, pp. 86-87. (Terry Lectures). Vale University Press, 1960. Italics mine.

gion is concerned, we can confidently expect that it will correct exaggerations and misplaced emphases. Psychology can aid religion also in providing techniques by which religious individuals and groups can achieve the goals toward which they are striving. The recent developments of procedures for measuring group opinion and attitudes, for advertising and propaganda, and for the management of large groups opens up exciting opportunities and arouses even more exciting hopes.

Religion needs such techniques today. So do democracy and liberalism. Up till now, the Communists are far in advance of us. They have reduced trouble-making almost to a science. They have made a much more detailed and intensive study of methods for developing and aggravating social tensions than the rest of us have for promoting good will. They operate numerous schools in which young people are trained to become professional revolutionaries. All this makes it imperative that we should take prompt and vigorous counter measures.

Religion can contribute as much to psychology as psychology can to religion. It is immensely to the credit of religion that it has insisted that human motivation is far more complex than biologically oriented thinkers have been inclined to allow. "Man does not live by bread alone," is a profound religious insight. It is also verified scientifie fact. Even if we add the sex urge to the hunger drive, we are still far from any adequate analysis or description of human motives.1

An increasingly realistic and more nearly complete knowledge of human motivation brings to light powerful compulsions that at least seem very different from the merely biologic drives that psychologists first discovered (for the simple reason, indeed, that they could hardly miss them), and which they too quickly took to be the only demands to which men needed to adjust. W. MacNeile Dixon's language verges on poetry, but he stated sober fact—as sober, that is, as any facts can be in the fantastic and all but incredible world that modern science presents for our contemplation,-when he wrote: The astonishing thing about the human being is not

so much his intellect and bodily structure, profoundly mysterious as they are. The astonishing and least comprehensible thing about him is his range of vision; his gaze into the infinite distance; his lonely passion for ideas and ideals, far removed from his material surroundings and

Is did better appeasable is percladagy the study of biology soft the behavior of assimals or an accuminate as extensive as possible with the characterists abbreverants that distinguish beautiful to the contraction of the study of of

animal activities, and in no way suggested by them, yet for which, such is his affection, he is willing to endure toils and privations, to sacrifice pleasures, to disain griefs and frustrations, and for which in rating them above his own life, he will stand until he dies; the profound conviction that if nothing be worth dying for, nothing is worth living for.

The inner truth is that every man is himself a creator, by birth and nature an artist, an architect and fashioner of words. If this be madness—and if the universe be the machine some think it, a very cestary of madness it most amanifestly is—none the less it is the lunsey in which consists the romance of life, in which lies our chief glory and our only hope.

our very negreour very negrebuch idealistic or spiritual motives are doubtless in some buch idealistic or spiritual motives are doubtless in some the spiritual sp

patience sufficient for fraternity, until we learn ourselves and teach our boys and girls that unless human beings become creative artists they remain petulant children, dangcous, predatory. . . To be artist and lover, that is the destined end of man.³

Because we are not arists or lovers, we find ourselves faring the responsibility, almost the probability, that mankind will destroy itself. The cellar of biological motivation, necessary as it is, is cramped, damp and gloomy. We can never achieve a sit is, is cramped, damp and gloomy. We can never achieve a sit is, is cramped, and we must remain "pedulant and analysis of the control of the con

Science, philosophy and religion work together most effectively, when each serves as a bad conscience for the other two. Each is the expression of a basic human need. Science is man's struggle to free himself from wishful thinking and speculation

Dison, W. MacNelle, The Human Schatter, p. 102. Longmons Green and Company, 1937.
 Bell, Bernard Iddings, The Crisis in Education, p. Whiteleney House, 1949.

that strays too far from its base in experience. In that it is a struggle against human finitude, it is a witness to man's yearning for infinity. Philosophy is the reminder that all knowledge is only "in part." It is the persistent protest that nothing whatever is so simple as common belief, or seience, or religion supposes. Religion keeps allow the finms of discontent with all actual achievement, whether of knowledge, or artistication of the conductor of the c

Psychologists have done excellent work, along with physiologists, in describing human needs: for food, water, air, elimination, sex satisfaction, and so on. They have done well, too, in analyzing human desires. They have dealt less adequate-

ly with capacities.

When the possibilities within all human beings of which they may never become aware, but which, one they are called into activity, may yield the deepest and most intense satisfaction, Psychotherapy in any form, or simple counseling, is largely an attempt to lead patients into experiences of satisfactions which the patients do not know exist or are possible. Sometimes the attempt to do that encounters strong resistances from entenshed beliefs and conscious desires.

Religion evokes extraordinary behavior and experiences. In doing so it brings to light capacities that in all probability would otherwise never be suspected. This enriches our understanding of human nature and enlarges the field of psychology.

Religion voices its protest also against immature and oversimplified programs for integrating activity around inadequate projects or principles. It stands invincibly against complete identification with any ideal or eause short of the very highest. Even patriotism, as Edith Cayell so splendidly said, "is not enough." Much less worthy of devotion are such ideals as those of a master race, an economic or scaled laces, or afushere. Even

"the American way of life" is not enough

Nothing short of the establishment in all the world of the Kingdon of Heaven, and making God glorious in the eyes of all non and women can resolve the dissonances of individual and social conflict. Men and women will continue to feel a deficit, vaguely, as they might feel the lack of some unknown but essential vitamin, until they have given themselves without reserve to that which is so glorious that it deserves everything man can give.

From the mutually enriching interaction of psychology and religion we may confidently expect new and important philosophical insights. The more understanding we achieve of human personality, the more apparent it becomes that a universe which has produced personalities and can be counted upon to the more personalities and can be counted upon to our every first personal transition of the counter from one which would have stopped short at ocean and continents, or even at chimpanzees.

New insights will arise also because our cosmology, our view of the universe, is affected or colored by our emotional reactions. Children from postularies, there is reason to believe, see coins as larger sold of the control of the

Under the devilith spell of Adam Smith and Charles Darwin values of the control of the three controls are controlled to the control of the co