

The Search for a Logical Faith

THE GLORY OF GOD, A Letter to My Son. By Robert O. Ballou. New York: Covici-Friede. 1938. \$2.

Reviewed by CLARA SAVAGE LITLEDALE

WHEN the five-year-old son of the author asked "Who is God?" his father found he had no quick and easy answer to his child's question. For in order to explain his conception of God he must go far back to where its roots lay in his childhood. He decided to try to answer his son by writing him a letter. The letter grew into a book—not a book for a child but a book for adults. Here the author tells about himself as a boy, of his mother, who, left a widow with several children, was able to live bravely and serenely because of her deep religious faith. She sang hymns with her children, she read aloud to them Psalms and the passages she loved best from the Bible, and for this son their cadence still echoes down the years. The family knelt together in their farm sitting-room and prayed to a God who they believed was immensely concerned with all the details of their personal lives. Their mother's faith took her and her family to the Methodist Episcopal Church in Wheaton, Illinois, which the author joined. Then gradually, the unquestioning and simple faith of his childhood was challenged by questioning and doubt. He found that the minister, the people of the congregation, finally the Church itself, did not follow the teachings of Jesus which they professed to believe. The war came and was fought by Christian nations with the sanction of their churches. Of the horrors of that war in which he served the writer tells his son in unexpurgated quotations. He concludes by saying, "For me the war (fought by Christian nations) put an end forever to any influence which the Christian church as it exists today, could have on me. . . . For I knew that the Christian church as a whole had never accepted Christ." The remainder of the book traces the gradual evolution of the author's faith based on his deep conviction of man's need of a religion and a God, and the last pages of the book are given to answering the question, How may one find his God?

Only a person who came from a strongly religious background could have written as Robert Ballou has. While he challenges and eventually discards religion in its conventional forms, he is always firm in his conviction of men's need to "find God" each in his own way. One wonders in reading the book whether a later generation of children, brought up with little or no religious background, will feel as passionately this need.

Those who are still loyal to the Church as an institution may be shocked by the author's willingness to discard all organized religion, even though he admonishes his son to draw truth and inspiration from whatever sources seem fruitful to him. Communicants in liberal churches will feel that the author disregards entirely churches which emphasize salvation by character as basic to their creed, while the Quakers may well remind Mr.

Ballou that theirs is a Christian church which has always stood firm against war.

But I doubt whether anyone of sensitivity can read this book without being deeply moved. Many will feel that it has cleared away their mists of confusion and has disclosed, beautifully, reverently, and logically a faith based on natural laws and a canon which they can joyfully accept.

Clara Savage Littledale is editor of The Parents' Magazine.

Papago Song Magic

SINGING FOR POWER. By Ruth Murray Underhill. Illustrated by Ma-Pe-Wi and Ben Pavisook. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1938. \$2.

Reviewed by OLIVER LA FARGE

THIS happy record of the song magic of the Papago Indians is a type of by-product of ethnological work which is all too scarce. The genuine literary contribution that some primitive peoples have to make has usually been totally obscured by the miserable influence of the Dryasdusts, or rendered almost obscenely unattractive by the sentimental rewriting and "improvements" of would-be-popular translators. It is a stroke of luck that a sound scientist possessed of a genuine literary gift should have come in contact with this delightful body of poetry.

There is a real enlargement of the corpus of American poetry to be had from a people who can write:

Where stands the cloud, trembling
On Quijotoa mountain,
The cloud trembling,
There lies my heart
Trembling.

There is delight in a people who can say, in describing ceremonial drunkenness:

Dizzy women
Are seizing my heart.
Westward they are leading me.
I like it.

Miss Underhill has been able to avoid the dry literalness which is the habitual scientific affectation of those who are afraid that the creeping in of sensitive appreciation may ruin their technical standing. She has also avoided the pseudo-literary floridness with which Cushing ruined the great Zuñi epic, and which afflicted Mary Austin in her poetic renderings. There have been a few scientists who added to their deep understanding of Indian poetry, their true sense of its background and purport, the ability to retain its literary worth in English. One thinks immediately of Matthews and his translations from the Navajo, and more recently of Bunzel's work on the Zuñi. Unfortunately, their contributions are hidden in heavy tomes, difficult to secure, and alarming to the ordinary reader from their mere appearance. Miss Underhill's work of equal merit has been, thank Heaven, put out in an unfrighting, attractive form.

There is a nice balance between her delightfully written explanations and the poems themselves, to which the drawings of her two Indian illustrators lend additional charm.

After Rome Fell

THE GATEWAY TO THE MIDDLE AGES. By Eleanor Shipley Duckett. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1938. \$5.

Reviewed by JOSEPH R. STRAYER

IT took Rome almost as long to fall as to rise. Her decline began in the third century, but it was three hundred years before Roman civilization became medieval. Only in the sixth century did consuls and senators vanish and the pope replace the urban prefect as the real ruler of the city of Rome. Only in the sixth century did monasteries replace schools of rhetoric as the chief training ground for scholars and administrators. This century saw the final collapse of Roman civilization, and Professor Duckett rightly calls it the gateway to the Middle Ages.

The author is primarily interested in the writers of the period, though she has sketched in the historical background. Few periods in the history of literature are more obscure; this book gives an able and impartial summary of the chief results of recent scholarly work in the field. Few periods are more important to the reader who is interested in the general problems of the rise and fall of civilizations; Professor Duckett offers him interesting material, but has made his task needlessly hard by the loose organization of her work. Minor points are elaborated and asides are multiplied until the main thread of the argument is often lost. Thus the excellent account of Boethius is broken by a long catalogue of medieval philosophers who were interested in problems which he raised. In the descriptions of Britain and Gaul, the layman who has no categories in his own mind in which to classify the material will not find it easy to discover the significant elements in a mass of details.

If these difficulties are overcome, there is much to be learned from the book. These sixth century men were living at a difficult time; old institutions and ideas were crumbling and the new were not yet formed. How did intelligent individuals react to these conditions? Many types emerge from Professor Duckett's study, ranging from academicians like the poet Corippus, who took refuge in old traditions, to modernists like Pope Gregory the Great, who had no interest in preserving the old because they were too busy in building the new. In between came the scholars, of whom Boethius was the greatest, who tried to save what they could of ancient learning by epitomizing it and adapting it to new conditions.

The author is at her best in summarizing individual works, such as Eugippius's "Life of St. Severinus," or the "Rule of St. Benedict." This ability reaches a high point in her account of Boethius's "Consolation of Philosophy," which is the best available in English. But Professor Duckett has been less successful in summing up the general tendencies of the sixth century. The general reader will need to read other works in order to make the most of the information contained in this book.

Joseph R. Strayer teaches history at Princeton University.

Man the Known

MAN THE SLAVE AND MASTER. By Mark Graubard. New York: Covici-Friede. 1938. \$3.50.

Reviewed by HOMER W. SMITH

PROFESSOR GRAUBARD'S book might be called an Outline of Man. Beginning with the biological basis of the individual, it compresses into a short space an account of the structure of the body and the function of the sense organs, nerves, and brain, the pattern of physiological reactivity, and the processes whereby ideas and behavior are conditioned by training and environment. It passes on to the mechanism of heredity, the function of chromosomes and genes, the determination of sex, the influence of hormones upon development, and the question of what man does or does not inherit from his progenitors. It then turns to the processes of mutation, selection, and evolution, recounting the early history of *Homo sapiens* from the ice ages down to modern man. The definition of race and the alleged differences in mental capacity of varieties of man are treated at considerable length because of their importance in current sociological thought. The origin and diffusion of culture, the significance of ethics, morals, art, music, and other modes of expression are subjected to brief analysis. The book ends by drawing a contrast between the present "menace of confusion" and the possibilities of reorganization of mankind along the lines of what the author calls "scientific humanism."

Broad as is the scope of this outline, it has at almost all points an authoritative ring. The author is trained in biology and genetics and has obviously taken pains to authenticate his statements in other fields. The book suffers not from any inadequacy of content, but from inadequacy of writing. The style is stilted, frequently sinking to the soporific measures of a bored instructor lecturing to bored sophomores. It is declared that the development of the human species is an amazing epic, a thrilling story to be told to old and young alike; indeed it is, but these qualities rarely emerge in this exposition. This is in part because of an improper sequence of topics, a failure to sustain a common thought in consecutive sentences, the use of irritating rhetorical questions, and the conscientious adherence to the forthright style of a technical dissertation. There are a few minor criticisms: the author fails to distinguish between innate reflexes and acquired automatisms; he naively accepts Marx's doctrines as proven; for a student of human nature he displays a quite unscientific and venomous prejudice against all philosophy and philosophers; and he makes a mountain out of the Freudian molehill. However, neither these nor the deficiency in style reduces the value of the book.

Graubard's philosophy is one of realism. He believes in the existence of the electrons, atoms, molecules and stars; he believes that man reacts to these external entities by virtue of his sense organs, and that little by little he is learning something about the ultimate nature of the universe, as well as how to master that

universe for his comfort and benefit. Religion, he says, has in the past failed to work because it is idealistic and unreal. As a substitute for the religious philosophies of the past he would start with our knowledge of what man is and why he behaves the way he does, and by applying and enlarging this knowledge, endeavor to shape society into a happier form. He takes the welfare of humanity of the species as a whole the world around, as the ultimate desideratum. By the good of humanity he means the immediate material and cultural welfare of every member of the species. Scientific humanism thus defined is conceivably within reach at a not too remote age, at least in countries with a mechanically efficient system of education. Many would be glad to elect it as the next step in our evolution.

Self-Made Surgeon

J. B. MURPHY: *Stormy Petrel of Surgery*. By Loyal Davis. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1938. \$3.

Reviewed by EDWARD D. CHURCHILL, M.D.

WHEN a surgeon reviews a biography of a surgeon written by a surgeon it is perhaps pardonable to revive a venerable cliché and refer to the dissection of a personality with a keen scalpel. This precise, unimpassioned, and thoroughly objective analysis of J. B. Murphy does bear many earmarks of a surgical operation. So much so, that one longs to have the author break his aseptic technique and let in a little dirt at certain points.

Born and reared on a farm that had been wrested from the wilderness by his Irish immigrant parents, J. B. Murphy made an early contact with surgery in the office of a country doctor. His first train ride landed him in Chicago to study medicine. Fighting his way in the rough and tumble competition of a growing medical center, he rose not only to a position of local prominence but to achieve international fame as a surgeon.

Murphy was a controversial figure in surgery largely because he possessed certain traits that would have been gilt-edged assets in many other fields. He was a showman at heart. "Show young Murphy a man in the spotlight and he would endeavor to emulate him."

With an audience his work was swifter, surer, more brilliant; with an audience his confidence was supreme. Like all men of his make, the best came out of him only when he played to the grandstand. If this be conceded, the man escapes much of the criticism which was visited upon him in later years. That was his nature; and if that nature did not fit into the mold prescribed by his colleagues, then more power to Murphy that he did not cramp it to fit.

Dr. Davis has written an excellent biography of this brilliant son of Irish immigrants who became an eminent surgeon. It is a biography that will hold the interest of the layman as well as the professional. As to interpretations, perhaps after all, the author has been wise to adopt the philosophy of his subject and "let the record show."

The Complete Jonson

BEN JONSON. Edited by C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson. Volume VI. New York: Oxford University Press. 1938. \$7.

Reviewed by TUCKER BROOKE

THE austere Oxford Ben Jonson has reached its sixth volume, marking one of the significant milestones in its progress. Ben's plays now stand complete (with one slight exception) in the first text that Ben could have altogether approved since the much less comprehensive, but almost equally meticulous, one which he himself edited in 1616. It is an edition for scholarly connoisseurs who prefer their textual criticism, like their wine, dry and scrupulously decanted.

As is well known, this great edition, to be completed in ten volumes, will be the monument chiefly of Dr. Percy Simpson, who has devoted half a lifetime to it. The newest volumes continue to bear also the name of the late Professor Herford, who died in 1931, and who, it is supposed, was mainly responsible for Volumes I and II on "The Man and His Work." Volume VI adds for the first time the name of Mrs. Simpson, by whose help, and by the aid of an award from the Leverhulme Trustees, it has been possible to produce Volumes V and VI within a single year. This is excellent speed and promises well for Volume VII, which—since it is to contain "The Sad Shepherd" and all the tangled glories of the *Masques*—will be eagerly awaited.

MEN WITHOUT WORK \$3.00

Introduction by

THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

Preface by LORD MACMILLAN

A report by the Pilgrim Trust of an investigation of unemployment in England, made by interviewing hundreds of the unemployed themselves. The report is based on the idea that unemployment is not a problem of industry alone, but a problem of the man out of work, his family, his community and his psychological outlook.

MEN WITHOUT WORK is of practical value to anyone concerned with the problem of unemployment.



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