

Review on *Religion in Primitive Society*

This work by Edward Norbeck of Rice University stands in grand contrast to *Religion Among the Primitives* by William J. Goode. A report has been made on the defects of a particularized analytical abstraction method by Goode. The objection has been made that such a selection method could hardly hold in the Physical-Chemical or Biological Sciences, but Norbeck cannot be so viewed.

The French Cousins said that culture had to go through a theological, a metaphysical and then a scientific stage of development, and this applies also even to Religion and Metaphysics. And in *Religion in Primitive Society* so far as technique and logistics are concerned, Professor Norbeck seems to have reached that stage.

With the establishment of "Society for the Scientific Study of Religion" certainly the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) has recognized this society as one of its cognate groups and it has not so recognized the Positivists and Humanists.

One holds that Science must be regarded as pragmatic and as the weight of both evidence and action at the moment is on the side of recognizing a Science-of-Religion, quite apart from Theology, it is only the egocentrics who will dissent. *Religion in Primitive Society* would fall well within this area of serious study.

Here instead of examining the whole work one quotes only: "The foregoing leads to the question of the future of religion. If religion means only fallacious supernaturalism, then it appears to be doomed as soon as scientific interpretations are advanced and have demonstrated their validity and usefulness by the results they achieve.

For more than one reason this seems to be an unrealistic view. There may indeed be naturalistic explanations for all phenomena, but we do not know that we will ever be able to formulate them or that they will give satisfaction. Man does not live by cool reason alone. We do not choose our spouses or conduct much of our lives in a wholly rational, matter-of-fact way. Our habitual diets are not made of the foods that we know to be the most nutritious, digestible, or otherwise suitable to health and pocketbook. Well-being can be measured in many ways. The importance of religion to many men seems to lie in its non-rational character, in the emotional satisfaction it provides. For these, religion in the form of supernaturalism will doubtless long continue to be preferred....

The future trend of religious change seems to be toward increasing secularization, but whether this trend will carry on to the disappearance of supernaturalism is uncertain. Religion as

supernaturalism is far from moribund, and long survival in this form seems assured. It also seems certain, whether or not supernaturalism dies, that something called religion will long be with us and that its nature will continue to change ... (pp. 259-260, end of book)

International Science

The research work of scientists is international. There are many cooperative and eclectic groups today. In 1959, working at the "National Research Center" in Cairo U. A. R., the writer studied the contributions of many lands to the increments of scientific knowledge. There may be a "cold war" as a power struggle between Russia and the United States, but about fifty percent of the discoveries and accreditations to all sciences came from the United States.

In the Horticultural sciences, broadly interpreted, Russia only once was in the first ten contributors and in tenth place in that one place. Belgium was second to the United States in the over-all picture. India and the Arab world have, outside of nuclear and theoretical physics, given much more to the world, all editors and commentators to the contrary. On the whole communism has come out badly and some Nations currently regarded as non-industrial have more than their share of excellent research scientists. In other words, to keep up with modern science we must not only be worldwide in our studies but also in our consideration of the contributors to these studies.

Geology could hardly persist if we restricted its Geography. Nor would Chemistry, nor Zoology. The statement of Jesus Christ, "Whatsoever ye do to the least of these, my creatures," cannot be ignored by Science. It includes the last as well as the first, and perhaps sometimes the last is more important. Certainly examinations of Radium have contributed more to our present day outlooks than that of Silicon, the most abundant of all solid elements.

Art as International

It is quite evident today that in some Arts, such as Painting and Ceramics, nearly all cultures have affected other cultures and nationalism has long been by-passed. Persons belonging to many schools are found in many parts of the world, and even communist lands are being affected. Look at "Rock-and-Roll."

Religion as International

The writer is not only a member of AAAS (Association for the Advancement of Science) and its offspring "Society for the Scientific Study of Religion," but also has been a member of the "World Congress of Faiths" since its founding in 1924, and the Royal Asiatic Society. Members and contributors are found in them from all lands and from many stages of cultures.

More recently Mrs. Dickermann Hollister of Greenwich, Connecticut, conceived a "Temple of Understanding" which is now being erected near Washington, DC. Among those most active in this undertaking are leaders from all faiths. San Francisco lists Rev. Scholefield, a Unitarian, Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, an Indian with an integrative outlook and Bishop Hanayama of the Buddhist Churches in America. One of the most active of the members is Bishop James Pike.

Even more concerned in "The Temple of Understanding" and "World Congress of Faiths" is Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, now President of India. Although a number of years back Dr. Radhakrishnan was listed as one of the seven greatest living savants, his person, his social position and his contributions to cultures, have been by-passed as if he were a myth.

It is not necessary to explain or defend Dr. Radhakrishnan here other than to point out he exemplifies the last remarks of Dr. Norbeck. Anti-religious groups such as the "Humanists," "General Semanticists," "Logical Positivists" and such act as if this man were not alive. They posit views which overlook humanity. A scientist omits nothing.

Thus while Chemistry and Physics could not bypass Radium or Selenium or Bismuth because they had abnormal properties, some cultural groups practically deny the existence of outstanding human beings because they do not fit within their premises.

Psychiatry cannot become a full Science until it recognizes the existence of all people, all persons. Anthropology has already done that. And the paucity of certain types is no cause for their total exclusion. "The atom that was rejected hath become the cornerstone" has happened in Chemistry and Physics," it should happen in the Psychological Sciences.

Religion and Psychedelics

Youth has discovered other states of consciousness. These are posited in all faiths. "First Epistle to the Corinthians," "Taittiriya Upanishad" and "Surangama Sutra" among others posit several bodies and several stages of consciousness. They have not yet been properly studied in or out of context and the word "Mystic" means whatever a writer wishes it to mean.

Anthropologists have discovered at least fringes of other stages and states of consciousness. When we become universal we will study seriously Indian Cosmic Metaphysics and we shall examine the human side of Dr. Radhakrishnan even if it be concluded he is superhuman.

All the abnormalities beginning with the "Beats" fit within the constructs of Indian Cosmic Psychology.

The moment includes a false internationalism. Every experience or escape from objective normality seems to be classified as out of equilibrium by the press, by the law-enforcement agents and by some psychiatrists (they are divided). This gives the Hippies an opportunity to seize words out of

context and defend their acts as if they were associated with Asian religion.

“Only in America”-Zen Buddhism (???!) is derived from Englishmen, a number of Englishmen who became famous for their “Zen” knowledge without ever having approached Japanese or Chinese Masters, despite the recognition of these Masters. An American advanced in Zen was always disregarded until the publishing of Kapleau’s “Pillars of Zen”—even Mrs. Ruth Sasaki, far more advanced, is not yet properly considered.

Now we have the young proclaiming **satori** (Japanese) and **mehta** (Indian) totally out of context and easily imposed on a culture which is not a full culture. Freedom of Speech is not justified by the discarding of all definitions and the use of terms to mean, in a Lewis Carroll sense, whatever the user wished it to mean. In the Sciences we have discrete definitions; in Society we do not.

Until we give the same consideration to the cultures of the Primitives, we may expect more and more uncertainties.

Very roughly considered, certainly from a sociological point of view, Christianity has contributed **Love**, Hinduism **Breath** and Buddhism **Meditation** (repose) as ways of life.

It is curious how the now displaced young are running after these things but out of context. They will remain out of context until “Yogis” have to face some standards as Scientists do and “Swamis” as Physicians do.

The principles of Religion as a sociological study to the anti-social people in our midst can lead both to contributions to the Psychological Sciences and to the adjustment of many people who seem to essay escapism.