

4/6/55

Dear Sam,

Re Raymond Schaffer's article "...for which I shall be, probably, seriously ridiculed....", I think the boy under-rates himself. His article showed definite evidence of thought, and people who offer their readers the fruit of their best cogitations seldom are ridiculed no matter how much they may be disagreed with. It is only when empty cliches are passed off as new ideas that the naive author is "seriously ridiculed" -- and that, not so much for the cliches offered, as for the folly of parroting second-hand ideas and thinking that they won't be recognized, *as such.*

Raymond Schaffer presented a good argument for his opinions. I do not agree with his conclusions because I do not think he has carried his thinking far enough, nor considered all the angles, but I most certainly do applaud his efforts to think the problem through as far as he has, and I hope that he will apply his own medicine to the new ideas he encounters pro religion as well as con ditto.

For instance, Schaffer states: "Even I...am guilty of being conditioned in thought by my upbringing and environment." What's there to be guilty about? Should a schoolboy be considered "guilty" for learning the multiplication tables? Should a college student feel guilty about using textbooks compiled by scientists who pioneered the scientific investigations he is endeavoring to study? Every human being is the product of the interaction of his personal environment acting and re-acting upon his hereditary structure. That is a fundamental fact of life -- as true here in America as on the Trobriand Islands. There is no living human being who can escape it -- we are, every one of us, the product of the interaction of our environment & heredity.

BUT, and here is the breakdown in Schaffer's argument: We, ourselves, each and every one of us, has the right to choose WHICH factors in our environment we shall accept. ~~maximizing~~ Just as the classic example of a bird in a cage -- we have the free will to choose whether we shall sing or sulk within our cage. We have the free will to choose those factors which will produce the finest and best type of human being, or we can choose those which will produce frustrated, unhappy, low grade citizens. And we have the right to attempt to create an environment which will condition our children and future citizens into the most desirable attitudes for both for personal happiness and for civic well-being. A belief in God and in the standards of values represented by a belief in God, is one of the strongest factors in producing good citizens. The President, therefore, was not only expressing his wishes as an individual, but as a civic leader as well.

It is futile to quibble whether the Founding Fathers of this nation were establishing freedom of "religion" or freedom of "worship": the basic fact to remember is that they were opening the way for all citizens to worship God according to the standards of the particular religion they followed. The Founding Fathers were Christian and obviously were stretching their individual tolerances to admit Christians of other denominations, plus persons of the Jewish faith, which were about all that the Colonies contained at that time. There is very little evidence to indicate that they thought of the various religious practices of the aborigines ^{when} drafting up this resolution, nor any evidence at all that they intended it to be used as an excuse for not worshipping at all. This much-abused provision of "freedom of religion" was intended to protect persons who wanted to worship God according to some minority sect, not at all as a screen for atheism. Unless, and that is a very important qualification, atheism could be, in itself, classed as a "religion". *Many persons*

Why consider themselves "atheists" because they disagree with some established form of worship are merely "dissenters".

Communism is obviously in the process of becoming a religion. It already has its martyrs, its saints, its standards of "right" and "wrong" and its standards of moral values. The writings of Karl Marx and Lenin are its sacred scriptures, and it has disciples ready and willing to die for their beliefs. In fact, in many ways Communism parallels early Christianity and its spread is in many ways similar to the spread of Christianity in its early stages. If and when it does succeed in becoming a religion instead of a political party it will be impossible to outlaw it in this nation.

However, that brings up an interesting point: Do we want the type of environment which a thorough impregnation of Communist ideals would give us?

Schaffer argues that it is a "fallacy that America stands for God and Christianity". It is not a fallacy. This nation was largely colonized by Christians who wanted more freedom in the expression of their religious observances. Our Constitution is full of references to God; the deliberations of our law-making bodies open and close with prayers to God; our laws recognize God and give protection to religious bodies; the very coin of this nation is stamped (or was, until very recently) with the name of God. Every intent and practice of the statesmen of this nation has been to promote an environment wherein the citizens observe the standards and values of right and wrong as exemplified in the Judaeo-Christian traditions. It is a return to these standards and values that the President requested -- not merely an attempt to drive every unattached citizen into membership with the Presbyterians. It is an attempt to create an environment for our citizens where they will absorb ideals of decency and honor in the same way they absorb the alphabet and the multiplication table; to give them moral and emotional strength as well as a good education and a healthy physique.

The great struggle of this century is this clash in spiritual values. Communism is more than a political ideology. It is a reversal of the Christian ideals of the dignity of the human soul and the individual's responsibility to his Maker. It is the recrudescence of the idea of "Might is Right", i.e. the concept that the State is God and there is no other God than the Government. That is not a new idea, at all. It is merely served up with a new twist -- the twist being that since all individuals are equal in the State, then no person should be allowed to have any more than anybody else -- (except the Government, of course. They have always been excepted, because one of the fundamental facts of human or animal existence is that some individuals are stronger than others and will take more than the others no matter how many laws are legislated against it.)

The basic concept on which This nation is founded is that whereas all citizens are equal in the eyes of the law and shall have equal protection from the law, they shall have the right to rise as far as they can -- so long as they do it lawfully; and this concept is modified only by the honor and decency of the individual himself.

And the only guarantee of the honor and decency of the individual citizen is the interaction of the environmental influences on his hereditary structure, i.e. the inculcated religious standards and civic values ^{of the social structure} into which he has been born.

THAT'S why I agree with the President when he urges a return to religion. ANY religion is better than no religion at all, but in a Christian nation, founded on Christian principles, it is most highly desirable that there be a solid foundation of law-abiding, God-fearing, practicing Christians. People that want to practice the ethical values of Karl Marx instead of the Bible would probably be much happier in Russia, anyway.